Network on Early Childhood Education and Care

DRAFT POSITION PAPER OF THE THEMATIC WORKING GROUP ON WORKFORCE QUALITY

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This Draft Position Paper has been prepared by the ECEC Network’s Thematic Working Group on Workforce Quality, which is led by Ms. Wytske Boomsma (Netherlands) and comprised of the following participants: Ms. Jo Van Heel and Ms. Tegan Johnson (Australia), Ms. Florence Pirard (Belgium-Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles), Mr. László Limbacher (Hungary) and Ms. Theresa Ryan (Ireland), for the 12th meeting of the ECEC Network (17-18 December 2012).

Please note that the document is a work in progress and will be further developed over the coming months.

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Chapter 1: Background and summary of previous findings

1. A well-qualified workforce with the skills to support a healthy early learning environment for young children is at the crux of quality early childhood education and care (ECEC). As documented in Starting Strong III, competent ECEC providers with the proper knowledge and skill set can foster environments that promote healthy child development and positive early learning, ultimately leading to better outcomes for children. Access to high-quality ECEC programmes with well-qualified staff is particularly important for children who live in disadvantaged families in order to break the cycles of poverty and other forms of discrimination (Leseman, 2009). This paper provides an update on the policies and country initiatives to improve the quality of the workforce reviewed in the Starting Strong III with a specific focus on how countries monitor workforce quality. This paper poses questions for discussion regarding how countries monitor workforce quality and next steps for enhancing approaches to monitoring.

What is workforce quality?

2. Workforce quality is a broad topic that touches on many ECEC policies at the system, programme, and individual level. Starting Strong III defines workforce qualifications as “the recognised level and types of knowledge, skills, and competencies that ECEC staff have received.” In addition to workforce qualifications, workforce quality encompasses a range of ECEC policies from education and training requirements to working conditions. It is important to note that quality is not limited to the staff that work directly with children and families; rather workforce quality derives from interdependent policies and practices that occur at all levels of policymaking, from frontline workers to national policymakers. Aspects of workforce quality include:

- **System characteristics**, such as regulations or policies set by the national or municipal government around initial education and training requirements, ongoing professional development, incentives to improve the workforce, higher education systems, regulated adult-to-child ratios, and monitoring (workforce training, qualifications, and staff performance).
- **Programme or centre characteristics**, such as leadership and management, support for workers, career growth and training opportunities provided, actual adult-to-child ratios, and the curriculum.
- **Workforce characteristics**, such as the qualifications, education, competencies, attitudes, preparation, training, pedagogical approach and profiles (e.g., gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background) of the individuals comprising the workforce.

### Questions for discussion

- How do countries define workforce quality?
- What kinds of indicators are used to measure workforce quality?
What does the research say about effective practices to improve workforce quality?

3. *Starting Strong III* provided an overview of available research on workforce quality, which is summarised here by way of background. Staff with more qualifications is better able to foster stimulating environments and high-quality pedagogy, which is linked to better outcomes for children (OECD, 2012). Specialised training in ECEC is also associated with more stable, sensitive and stimulating interactions and consequently, better child outcomes. Research shows that initial training is not enough; in order for staff to maintain their professional quality, they need to engage in ongoing professional development. There is limited evidence on what specific types of staff training and professional development are most effective, but staff that participate in on-the-job training and workshops tend to provide higher quality care than their peers who do not participate.

4. *Starting Strong III* also addressed the structural quality indicators that constitute working conditions. Research findings show that staff working conditions are directly related to safe, healthy, and enriching environments for children. The ability of staff to tend to the needs of children is influenced by their work environment, salary, and work benefits. One study found that low wages negatively impacted the ways in which staff interacted with children and led to higher turnover rates (Huntsman, 2008). Low staff-child ratios and smaller group sizes are linked to better job satisfaction and better process quality (Litjens and Taguma, 2010; Huntsman, 2008; Rao et al., 2003; Burchinal et al., 2002; Clarke-Stewart et al., 2002).

**Question for discussion**

- What new research or evidence has emerged from your country that was not mentioned in *Starting Strong III*?

Cultural and political context

5. The quality of the workforce varies across, as well as within, OECD countries by their own accounts. Many factors will influence a country’s goals regarding workforce quality, including the ECEC supply system, tertiary and vocational education opportunities, cultural views on the ECEC profession, and the current status of the ECEC workforce. As Oberhuemer et al. (2010) note:

> Research located within a theoretical framework – e.g., comparative education studies, the social history and sociology of childhood, cultural psychology – suggests that our images of childhood, learning, and development are initially constructed within specific historical, cultural, economic and geo-political contexts (see e.g., Alexander, 2000; James and Prout, 1998; Fleer, 2007; Penn, 2005; Rogoff, 2003). These ‘cultural scripts’ (Rosenthal, 2003) not only permeate our conceptions of early childhood centres as a public good, but also our images of those who work with young children.

6. It is important to understand the role that culture might play in aspects of workforce quality. For example, cultural concepts around gender roles and women’s employment might play a role in determining the makeup of the ECEC workforce, as well as wages and qualifications. Similarly, cultural attitudes around the family and the role of government might determine whether ECEC is viewed as a parental responsibility or a public good that is primarily the responsibility of the government to provide. This might determine the degree to which the government regulates and monitors the ECEC workforce.
**Split and integrated ECEC systems**

7. In addition to cultural influences, workforce quality should also be examined in the political context that determines the structure of the ECEC system. Understanding how ECEC systems are organized into split and integrated countries is essential to understanding the workforce in each type of system. One of the major findings in *Starting Strong III* related to the differences between split and integrated ECEC systems. In a split ECEC system, children age three until compulsory school age receive services separate from children under age three. Typically, children aged three to six attend a preschool in an educational setting aligned with the primary school, and children under age three attend child care or day care programmes designed to care for children while parents work. In some cases, older children might attend child care programmes as well if preschool is not universally available or does not cover the full working day. In split ECEC system countries, initial education and training requirements tend to be lower for child care workers as compared to preschool teachers. Most countries reported in *Starting Strong III* that they required ISCED 3 or higher for preschool teachers. In some cases, preschool teachers are considered the same as primary school teachers with the same salary, benefits and professional status. In the child care sector, countries reported that pay is low and turnover is high. On the other hand, unitary system countries approach teachers for children from birth to compulsory school age in a similar manner in terms of training and education requirements and pay and wages. *Starting Strong III* enumerated which countries have integrated and split approaches to initial education, broken down by sector (see Tables 1 and 2 in the Appendix).

8. This paper focuses on the policies and viewpoints of policymakers in split system countries: Australia, Belgium, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, and the United States, reflecting the composition of the thematic working group and secretariat contributors. These countries share several similarities in their structure and approach to ECEC, including the fact that all of the countries have split ECEC systems (although some aspects of Australia’s system resemble an integrated system, such as uniform teacher training requirements and equal access to qualified teachers at centre based services). Thus, the paper does not reflect the experiences of all OECD countries, particularly those with integrated ECEC systems. The working group hopes that countries with diverse experiences will add to this paper during the discussion at the 12th Meeting of the OECD Network on Early Childhood Education and Care.

9. In an integrated system, services for children below compulsory school age are integrated into the broader educational system. These countries typically do not differentiate between teachers who work with children under age six and those teachers who work with children in primary education in terms of working conditions and educational requirements (although specific training requirements may differ). Likewise, pay and benefits are the same as other teachers. Examples of countries with integrated systems include New Zealand, Spain, Finland, and Sweden. This paper does not reflect the experiences of countries with integrated ECEC systems, as they were not represented in the working group.

**Chapter 2: Country policies**

10. *Starting Strong III* illustrated how countries have approached workforce quality through policies related to education and training requirements, professional development and incentives. It also described workforce characteristics and working conditions. The illustrative examples below from working group countries provide updates since the publication of *Starting Strong III* and more in-depth examples of previously cited policies. These examples provide context for the discussion of monitoring workforce quality in subsequent chapters.
Initial qualifications and pre-service training

11. Most countries in the working group confirmed the findings in *Starting Strong III*: preschool teachers who typically care for children ages three to six in an educational setting must have a bachelor degree. In some cases, these teachers are no different than primary school teachers and must be fully certified teachers. On the other hand, qualifications and training requirements for child care workers are much lower. Some countries require only a secondary degree (ISCED 2 or 3), and a couple have no requirements. The examples below provide updates on how countries have adapted their policies since the publication of *Starting Strong III* and highlight additional examples not mentioned previously:

12. **Australia** has revised qualification requirements for ECEC services as part of the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care, which commenced on 1 January 2012. By 2014, centre based services with less than 25 children must have an early childhood teacher in attendance for 20% of the time the centre provides care; centre based services with more than 25 children must have an early childhood teacher onsite for six hours each day if the service operates 50 hours or more per week or 60% of operating hours if the centre operates for less than 50 hours per week. In addition, centres will need to ensure that half of the educators have or are working toward an early childhood education diploma and the remainder of educators must have or be working towards a Certificate III level qualification1 or above. The requirements will increase again in 2020 when a second early childhood teacher will be required to be in attendance at some services. Qualification requirements have also been introduced to family day care services. From 2014, all family child care educators are to have minimum Certificate III level qualification (or be actively working towards). Family child care co-ordinators will be required to have a diploma level qualification.

13. In **Belgium** (Wallonia-Brussels Federation), nearly all children from ages two-and-a-half to six attend preschool prior to compulsory school. The preschool teacher profile does not differ from primary school teachers. The law defines 13 general competencies for all the teachers and six roles (a social actor, researcher, educated person, a person in a relationship, a pedagogue, and a practitioner). Preschool teachers must have a bachelor degree (ISCED 5B) with specific orientation in early childhood education. In child care programmes, primarily serving children from birth to age two-and-a-half, all providers must attend an initial training and have a secondary diploma or the equivalency in child care services (ISCED 3B). Child care programme managers must have a bachelor degree (ISCED 5B) with a social or medical orientation, but no specific ECEC coursework is required.

14. In **Hungary**, ECEC staff provision norms and the qualification and training requirements are regulated legally. In services for zero-to-three-year-olds, a secondary vocational ECEC qualification (ISCED 3C or 4C [the latter can be obtained by completing a vocational training course after the final secondary exam]) is required and typical for the professional staff, called child care pedagogues. About 93% of them are qualified. Bachelor child care pedagogue degree courses (ISCED 5A) were established in 2009, both full- and part-time. In services for three-to-six/seven-year-olds, a four-year kindergarten pedagogy Bachelor's degree (ISCED 5A) has been required to be a kindergarten pedagogue (educator) since 2004. Now, within the workforce dealing with kindergarten groups, 94.5% have a kindergarten pedagogy Bachelor's degree, 2.7% have another pedagogy Bachelor's or Master's degree, and 2.5% have a secondary vocational kindergarten pedagogy qualification (the former requirement).

15. **Ireland**’s Early Start Programme, which caters to approximately 2% of the age cohort and targets disadvantaged urban children, requires that each classroom of 15 children be staffed by a trained primary

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1 The Certificate III level in Australia sits somewhere between the ISCED Levels 3 and 4. The length of the course and the education setting aligns with Level 3. However, the certificate is issued based on the student achieving competencies that are more closely aligned with Level 4. The length of time may vary because Certificate level qualifications are based on competencies.
teacher with at least a bachelor degree (ISCED 5A) as well as a child care worker with at least one year of relevant post secondary education (ISCED 4C). ECEC programmes that wish to participate in the Pre-School Year Scheme, which provides a free year of pre-primary education to all age-eligible Irish children (94% of the age cohort are enrolled), must provide a preschool teacher with a minimum of ISCED 4C in early education. The number of required preschool teachers increases as the number of children increases. Preschool programmes receive a higher capitation rate if staff has higher educational attainment. Apart from the requirements of the Free Pre-school Year Scheme and the Early Start Programme, Ireland does not regulate staff qualifications for other ECEC programmes, although centres are encouraged to have at least half of child care staff with a qualification “appropriate to the care and development of children”. While the compulsory school age in Ireland is six, children can be enrolled in primary school (ISCED 1) from the age of four. Nearly 40% of four-year-old children and almost all five-year-old children attend primary schools and are therefore taught by trained primary teachers.

16. The Netherlands requires teachers in child care centres and preschools to have at least an ISCED 3 degree, with a special training programme for ECEC. The Netherlands has several ECEC programmes for disadvantaged children. To work in these programmes, teachers must have special training in a particular curriculum, which can take at least two years. The training is publicly funded by the municipality and national governments. The level of the training is ISCED 3 and is especially for people working in ECEC programmes. Each programme has a different focus, so training varies, as it trains teachers to work in specific programmes.

17. In the United States, each individual state determines initial training and educational requirements for both child care and preschool if the state has a preschool programme. Of 51 state-funded pre-kindergarten programmes, 29 require that lead teachers have a bachelor degree (ISCED 5). In terms of child care services, states typically require a secondary school diploma (ISCED 3) or equivalency or no degree at all – 32 states require a secondary degree or less. A few states require a state credential or two-year postsecondary degree for lead teachers. Only one state (Rhode Island) requires a four-year degree in early childhood development in order to be a lead teacher. Forty states require at least 15 hours of annual training. In the Head Start programme, which sets national requirements, the law states that by September 30, 2013, 50% of Head Start teachers nationwide must have a bachelor degree (ISCED 5) and teaching assistants must have a Child Development Associate (ISCED 4). As of 2011, slightly just over half of Head Start lead teachers had a bachelor degree or higher.

### Questions for discussion

- To what degree are initial training and education requirements an indicator of a high-quality workforce?
- Do you monitor this aspect of the workforce and if so, how do you monitor? And
- How do you use the monitoring results?

### Ongoing training and professional development

18. As mentioned above, Starting Strong III cited ongoing training and professional development of the ECEC workforce as a critical component in ensuring that providers maintain their skills and have the opportunity to grow in their career. Ongoing training can also help providers feel supported in their role as educators and caregivers. Working conditions are linked to ongoing training, as providers with the competency and skills to effectively manage the classroom and address issues may experience less stress than providers who lack such skills. Ongoing opportunities for professional development also provide a forum for connecting with other ECEC providers, creating a source of social support for workers.
19. In Australia, the federal government funds the Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP), which includes Professional Support Coordinators (PSCs) agencies in each state and territory. PSCs provide professional development, advice and resources to assist child care services to provide quality child care and to be inclusive of children from diverse backgrounds. PSCs facilitate professional development that is based on evidence and good practice to support eligible child care service educators, carers and managers to provide quality child care for all children. A key role of the PSCs is to support child care services transition to the new National Quality Framework. PSCs also facilitate professional development to build the leadership and management capacity of services, and to ensure educators and carers understand the latest trends in early childhood education and pedagogy.

20. Belgium requires that teachers complete six paid half days of training per year, which is financed by public funds at no cost to the teacher. Child care workers must also complete compulsory in-service training, but the law does not specify a certain amount of time. Public institutions (IFC for teachers; ONE for child care workers) determine the orientation of the main content of the training. For example, every three years, a new action plan is defined and has to be approved by the government for the training for the child care workers. Training operators must be recognised officially and must refer to this action plan in Wallonia-Brussels Federation.

21. In Hungary, the ongoing training and professional development requirements are also regulated legally. In services for zero-to-three-year-olds, professional staff is obliged to collect 50 credit points at accredited events, including a 40-hour course, within a 5-year period. In addition, a network of lead centres can also organise professional events and exchange visits among centres. In the kindergarten sector (three-to-six/seven-year-olds), kindergarten pedagogues (educators), like teachers in general, have to complete 120 hours of organised optional courses of professional development every seven years. They may take a recognised professional examination as well.

22. Several countries reported little to no training requirements. In Ireland, participation in continuing professional development courses is optional. In the United States, 43 state prekindergarten programmes require at least 15 hours of annual training. For child care providers, 34 states require 15 hours or less of annual training.

Questions for discussion

- Do you monitor participation in on-going training and professional development?
- What indicators do you use and how do you determine if training and professional development are successful?

Working conditions

23. Working conditions for ECEC providers also matter; staff that have satisfactory working conditions, a sufficient salary, and benefits are more likely to stay in the field and improve upon their skills. Beyond formal training, ECEC staff need time for shared reflection about the daily practice with other members of their educational team and opportunities to be accompanied by specialised staff (pedagogical coordinators, pedagogists, counsellors) in the context of their educational environment to promote continuous professional development. As discussed in the Core study (Urban et al., 2011), “the quality workforce cannot be reduced to the sum of the individuals’ competences … the quality of the workforce is determined by the interaction between competent individuals in what we refer to as a ‘competent system’.” Different levels of competencies can be identified and interconnected: system, centre, and individual. Teamwork is crucial, as is inter-agency co-operation and the competencies of the governing body.
24. In general, countries reported that working conditions were better for ECEC staff working with children from three to six in preschool settings. Australia, Belgium (Wallonia-Brussels Federation) and Ireland (Early Start programme only) pay public preschool teachers the same as primary school teachers and the salaries tend to be closer to the country’s median salary. In the Netherlands, primary school teachers earn more than preschool teachers. Child care workers tend to receive lower pay and poorer working conditions than preschool teachers. In Ireland and the United States, child care workers typically make little more than the national minimum wage. For example, in the United States, the average salary for child care workers is under the poverty level for a family of four. In Australia, child care workers with no qualification may earn marginally above the minimum wage, while those with a Certificate III may earn around 15 to 20% above minimum wage. In Hungary, in general, for public employees, the wage structure is basically defined by educational attainment and length of time spent working. Because of their higher qualification, salaries tend to be higher for school teachers than for kindergarten pedagogues (educators) and for child care pedagogues working in the sector for zero-to-three-year-olds. Within each level of provision, work evaluation by the leadership and undertaking extra tasks may result in a modest reward for professional development achievements in the form of a slight wage increase.

25. Adult-to-child ratios are an important component of overall working conditions. When these ratios are too high, teachers might experience stress and become overwhelmed. The Netherlands requires preschool classrooms to include no more than 16 children and two preschool teachers for children between the ages of two and four. In the United States, there is no nationally mandated ratio; rather, these standards are set at the regional or municipal level. However, the Head Start programme does set ratios for its programmes, which are 1:4 for children under age three and 1:10 for children ages three and four. In Ireland, the required adult-to-child ratios range from 1:3 for children under one to 1:11 for children participating in the Free Pre-school Year Scheme. In Hungary, for kindergartens (ages three to six/seven), the legal regulation prescribes 20 children per group as an average and 25 children per group as the maximum. There were 23.2 children per group as a national average in 2010/11. There is an Act prescribing that an educator should be with the group from opening to closing hours of the kindergarten, with an overlap in the middle of the day when two educators should be present. The national average of children-to-educator ratio was 11.1:1 in 2010/11. In addition, one caregiver should also be with the group. Special education needs (SEN) children are counted multiple times in the calculations (two or three each instead of one). This way, the real number of all children in a group integrating SEN children can be lower than normal. SEN children and also are provided with special support staff. An important element of the working conditions and quality of service is that specialist professionals are available in cases of need (i.e., developmental and special educators, psychologists, speech therapists). In services for children under the age of three, maximum group size is 12 for children between ages one to two, and 14 for children between ages two to three. There are two pedagogues for each group, so the adult-to-child ratio is 1:6 and 1:7 respectively. The group size is 10 for infants, with two child care pedagogues. For each group, there is a 0.5 assistant staff. Children with special educational needs can be integrated; in these cases, each child counts as two.

26. In Australia, the National Quality Framework requires that services maintain the required educator-to-child ratios at all times based on the ages and number of children being educated and cared for at the service. From 1 January 2012, all long day care services are required to have an educator-to-child ratio of 1:4 for children aged between birth and 24 months. From 1 January 2016, long day care and preschool services are required to have an educator-to-child ratio of 1:5 for children aged 25 months to 35 months and an educator-to-child ratio of 1:11 for children aged over 36 months and including preschool age. From 1 January 2014, all family day care services are required to have an educator-to-child ratio of 1:7 with no more than four children under preschool age.

27. Perhaps a good indicator of working conditions in the ECEC field is the turnover rate, or the proportion of workers who leave the ECEC field in a given year. Specific turnover rates vary by country,
but most agree that they would like to reduce turnover. In Australia, the turnover rate is about 9% for preschool teachers and nearly 16% for child care workers. Ireland estimates that turnover is as high as 10%. In the United States, estimates are even higher and range from 25 to 40% and vary regionally.

Questions for discussion

• Do you monitor working conditions? If so, which indicators do you use?
• Which aspect of the working conditions do you consider as the priority?
• What are the challenges in raising working conditions and what strategies have been taken to tackle the challenges?

Requirements for assistants

28. A couple countries reported that requirements and qualifications for teacher aides or assistants are low compared to those for lead teachers. Oftentimes, assistants who work directly with children have little or no initial qualifications or background in early childhood education.

29. In Belgium (Wallonia-Brussels Federation), some schools have puericultrices (teacher assistants) that aide preschool teachers in some classrooms, but they are not permitted to work alone with children and instead work under the supervision of the preschool teacher. Puericultrices must have at least a secondary school diploma (ISCED 3) and training specific to working with children under age six. A few schools have assistants d’instituteur maternel who do not have a qualification. However, many preschool teachers work alone in the classroom and working with assistants is not systematic.

30. In Hungary, support staff in services for children under three are not required to have any qualifications. In kindergartens, support staff are not required legally to have a qualification either (only to have completed general ISCED 2 education), but they can attend different child care courses, and new job applications may be invited from those having a vocational qualification (ISCED 2C or 3C).

31. For Ireland’s Free Preschool Scheme, there is no minimum qualification requirement for preschool assistants. However, a higher capitation rate is payable to ECEC settings that have higher qualified staff. For the Early Start Programme, child care workers are required to be qualified to ISCED 4C.

32. In the United States, requirements for assistants, especially in the child care sector, have been historically quite low. However, the Head Start programme will soon require that all centre-based programmes have teaching assistants that have at least a child development associate credential (ISCED 4) or be working toward such degree.

Questions for discussion

• Do you monitor workforce quality for assistants?
• If so, what indicators do you use?

Chapter 3: An update on efforts to improve workforce quality

33. Improving the quality of the ECEC workforce remains a focus of all of the countries represented in the workgroup. Starting Strong III highlighted dozens of policy initiatives and strategies to improve and support the ECEC workforce, and the working group reports some new initiatives despite ongoing budget constraints. Many countries have made large investments in a range of approaches designed to improve the
workforce quality. The particular approaches span a range of policy areas, focusing on workforce environment, higher education, regulations, and ongoing training and professional development opportunities. Most countries reported that they believe improving the workforce requires multiple and sustained investments that work in concert at the system, centre, and individual level to support a high-quality workforce. We outline some examples of country initiatives below. Some of these initiatives are new and have been implemented since the publication of Starting Strong III; others have been ongoing and are highlighted again below as illustrative examples of sustained efforts to improve ECEC workforce quality. These updates provide further context for how to monitor emerging approaches to improving workforce quality.

**Planning and developing goals**

34. Some countries included workforce quality improvement as part of an overarching framework to improve quality in ECEC. Workforce quality initiatives are thus aligned with overall country goals, regulations, and funding. Both Australia and Ireland have improved the qualifications of the ECEC workforce as part of a larger quality initiative.


36. **Ireland** has a Workforce Development Plan for the Early Childhood Care and Education Sector, published by the Department of Education and Skills in 2010, which provides a framework for ensuring that ECEC workers have access to accredited training so as to improve quality and standards in ECEC. The Plan sets out objectives in relation to issues such as flexible learning, modular delivery and quality assurance of courses. Ireland has already made some progress on improving flexibility and has developed Common Award Standards that reflect agreed occupational role profiles based on research and the national quality and curriculum frameworks (Síolta and Aistear). The new award standards are intended to promote consistency in quality, content and delivery and to ensure that all graduates are ready to enter ECEC employment upon graduation.

**Wage incentives and scholarships**

37. In **Ireland**, the capitation rate for programmes participating in the Free Pre-school Year Scheme is based on the qualifications of the preschool leaders.

38. Several states in the **United States** have adopted wage incentive and scholarship programmes to support ECEC workers that achieve higher levels of education or training. Both programmes originated in North Carolina. Through the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Project, states provide scholarships through a public-private partnership to help early childhood providers receive higher education. Participation in T.E.A.C.H. has been linked to better retention among participants. The Child Care WAGE$ Programme provides wage supplements to providers that attain degrees or credentials and after the provider completes six months in the same child care facility. This programme is also linked to better retention and higher educational attainment, although neither has been evaluated using rigorous methodology.

**Improving working conditions**

39. **Australia**’s 2010 National Early Childhood Workforce Census showed that close to 90% of workers across the sector are satisfied with their job, even while only 51% stated they were satisfied with their pay and conditions. This demonstrates a commitment to the role beyond the salary. The Australian Government is currently working with the sector and employee organisations to determine the best way to
support the workforce to provide the highest level of care and education services. The National Quality Framework introduced in January 2012 is playing a critical role in building on the professionalism in the sector and creating more defined careers for those who remain in ECEC for the long term.

**Accompaniment/ Mentoring/ Peer-to-peer training**

40. In Belgium (Wallonia-Brussels Federation), educational advisors from the Birth and Childhood Office (*Office de la Naissance et de l’Enfance*, ONE) will accompany child care providers and facilitate peer-to-peer learning to enhance their teaching practices and educational approach. ONE also subsidises accompaniment action of trainers in the field (*accompagnement*) to facilitate reflection on daily practice with children, families, and other professionals. In the teaching sector, education advisors can also support teachers’ reflection and projects.

41. In Hungary, new kindergarten pedagogues (educators) work as a trainee for the first year, and an experienced mentor is appointed to help each of them.

42. Ireland’s national quality framework, Síolta, is designed to define, assess, and support the improvement of quality in ECEC settings. Síolta is comprised of national principles, standards, and components of quality that address all areas of practice in all ECEC settings. Twelve principles outline the overall vision, and 16 standards and 75 components allow for the practical application of this vision across all aspects of ECEC practice. ECEC settings can use the framework to give them ideas and to help them reflect on their practice. Settings that are participating in the Free Preschool Year scheme are required to provide a programme that adheres to the principles of Síolta. ECEC settings can also engage with Síolta in a more structured way by participating in the Síolta Quality Assurance Programme (QAP). QAP participants are assigned a mentor and complete a baseline assessment, followed by quality improvement work based on the outcome of their self-assessment. The participant works to develop quality practices and submits a portfolio for validation and certification. The QAP is currently being field tested nationally, and participation is voluntary.

43. The Netherlands recently invested money in an accompaniment initiative that trains ECEC providers with higher education levels (ISCED 4 or higher) to use data-driven teaching approaches and coach other teachers in the classroom.

44. The United States’ Head Start programme uses mentor coaches that provide one on one mentoring for Head Start teachers in early literacy development. The mentor coach observes the Head Start teacher and the pair work together to improve instruction and children’s learning.

**Higher education**

45. Australia supports university places for students wishing to undertake early childhood education qualifications. In 2009, Australia supported 500 slots and increased to 1 500 slots in 2011. Furthermore, ECEC teachers who work in rural or remote areas and areas of high need can receive debt reduction through the Higher Education Loan Programme (HELP).

46. The Netherlands recently made a large investment in quality and specifically in higher education to help preschool teachers improve children’s language skills. On the ground, reports indicated that many ECEC teachers did speak and write in Dutch, but the government decided that this should be improved (from ISCED 3 to ISCED 4). This was particularly true for ECEC workers working with disadvantaged children. The parliament decided to raise the education level of these workers and funded a course and exam for ECEC workers who work with disadvantaged children, which will ultimately reach 90% of eligible workers.
47. **In Ireland**, the proportion of ECEC workers with a qualification increased significantly over the past decade. In 1999, more than 40% of the ECEC workforce had less than a secondary education. However, by 2008, 61% of the ECEC workforce had achieved a qualification in early childhood at the ISCED 4C level or higher. This trend in part reflects overall increasing education levels in Ireland and also the country’s focus on funding training and education and building infrastructure to support improved qualifications in the ECEC workforce. Ireland also funds students in ECEC higher education programmes, both in direct support to students and grants to institutions. Ireland established City and County Childcare Committees and funds Voluntary Childcare Organisations to work in partnership with the national government to promote training and quality locally. These organisations support quality initiatives as well as training, networking and mentoring opportunities. At the national level, Ireland has two framework documents (Síolta and Aistear) that outline the scope and nature of professional practice in early childhood. National regulations also encourage education and training, but do not require specific qualifications.

**Improving ECEC for children ages birth to three**

48. **Australia** requires all education and care services must provide a programme that is based on an approved learning framework, which considers the development needs, interests and experiences of each child and takes into account the individual differences of each child. Approved learning frameworks have been developed to guide educators in developing quality programmes that support children’s learning. *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (Early Years Learning Framework)* outlines practices to support and promote children’s learning. The aim of the Early Years Learning Framework is to extend and enrich children’s learning from birth to five years and through the transition to school. It assists services to provide young children with opportunities to maximise their potential and develop a foundation for future success in learning. Australia is also introducing improved educator-to-child ratios for child care and preschool services as part of the National Quality Framework. An educator-to-child ratio of 1:4 for children ages birth to 24 months was implemented on 1 January 2012. An educator-to-child ratio of 1:5 will be introduced for children ages 25 months to 35 months from 1 January 2014.

49. **Belgium** (Wallonia-Brussels Federation) is focusing on training child care workers, who primarily care for children ages two-and-a-half and younger, with an educational focus. Previously, the focus has been oriented around health. In 2002, the country developed a pedagogical framework for children under age three based on input from researchers, experts, and child care providers. The dissemination process included written materials for child care workers, seminars with opportunities for real-life implementation, and accompaniment (*i.e.*, mentoring).

### Questions for discussion

- How are efforts to improve workforce quality informed by monitoring activities?
- What can monitoring tell us about the degree to which interventions described in this chapter are successful?

**Chapter 4: Monitoring workforce quality**

50. Several OECD countries report a need to focus on monitoring workforce quality. Given the important role that the ECEC workforce plays in the promotion of child development and early learning, many countries want to know how to focus monitoring efforts specifically on workforce quality. How each country measures the quality of their workforce and the success of initiatives to improve quality will differ depending on each country’s goals; some will measure according to compliance with regulations, completion of educational or training programs, or performance on standardized measures – to name only a
few of the possibilities. As documented in *Starting Strong III*, many countries have measures in place to monitor staff performance through inspections, survey and observations, internal evaluations, self-assessments, and rating tools. The countries in the workgroup employ many of these strategies, although the most common approach is inspections with some focus on workforce quality indicators or review of staff activities.

51. Many countries conduct inspections at predetermined intervals to examine the overall quality of a programme. These inspections typically include a comprehensive examination of different aspects of programme quality, including those related to workforce quality. For example, in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation of Belgium, ONE is responsible for monitoring the quality of child care services and determining whether the centre or service receives a “Quality Certificate”. The law requires that all child care services develop an education project that is established and agreed to by all staff and addresses working with families, children, and other professionals. Written guides help staff determine what to include in the educational project. In addition, staff must agree to a quality improvement plan, which describes what the staff will do in the next three years to improve quality conditions. During the onsite inspections, ONE agents do not use a standard scale, but instead review the staff educational project and analyse the quality improvement plan. If the ONE agent finds the educational project and quality improvement plan to be sufficient, ONE grants a quality attestation (compulsory for financed child care services) that is valid for three years. Another system monitoring of quality exists for preschools with a specific inspector’s team of the Wallonia-Federation direction generale de l’enseignement.

52. In Hungary, there have been different approaches to monitoring workforce quality in kindergartens. A former policy placed emphasis on quality assurance methods with self-assessment and surveying partner satisfaction. A new policy establishes a system of central professional control of institutions.

53. In Ireland, the Health Service Executive (HSE) developed a National Assessment Guide for use by its Inspectorate in monitoring the extent to which each child’s learning, development and well-being is facilitated within ECEC services, although several indicators related to workforce quality feed into the evaluation. For example, the inspector looks at the extent to which personal care provided meets basic needs and to which secure relationships with children are fostered. The HSE Inspector rates each factor as inadequate, minimal or good. The Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate is responsible for monitoring the Early Start Programme using a range of evaluation processes including Whole School Evaluation (WSE), which looks at the operation of the school in the areas of school management, school planning and self-evaluation, teaching, learning, pupil achievement, and support for pupils. The inspection includes substantial periods of observation of teaching and learning as well as a review of planning processes and interviews with stakeholders. WSE examines the level of preparation and planning and the quality of teaching and learning, among other items. Newly qualified teachers are registered with conditions, pending an evaluation by the Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate. During two unannounced visits, the Inspectorate evaluates the professional competence of probationary teachers by observing teaching and learning, examining preparation and progress records and evaluating samples of pupils’ work. The outcome determines whether the teacher can move to full registration. The Department of Education and Skills and HSE jointly developed a protocol to evaluate the quality of ECEC provision, which has been recently piloted.

54. The Netherlands also visits municipalities and inspects one-third of public and private kindergarten and preschool programmes. These monitoring visits are conducted by inspection and health services. Programmes are evaluated in four domains, which include structural and process quality evaluations of some aspects of workforce quality. Structural quality factors include meeting the required training and educational standards, having adequate command of the Dutch language and ratios. Process quality factors include stimulating children’s social skills and independence, interaction with children and
responsive language. Each item receives a rating on a scale of one to four based on classroom observations, reading reports, and interviewing management and parents.

55. Other countries use rating systems that include factors related to workforce quality. **Australia** rates each ECEC programme based on performance in seven areas, including staffing arrangements and relationships with children. The “staffing arrangements” quality area looks at aspects of structural quality (such as ratios, education and training requirements, and programme size) as well as communication and co-operation amongst staff members. The “relationships with children” quality area examines whether teachers’ interaction with children is warm, respectful and responsive. It also looks at whether children are able to engage with adults in meaningful and open interactions and whether adults help children feel secure, confident and included and support children in their relationships with others. Ratings are based on classroom observation. ECEC programmes will receive a rating for each of the seven quality areas on a 5-point scale, plus an overall rating. An integral part of the assessment and rating process is the Quality Improvement Plan, which includes an assessment by the provider of the quality of the practices of their service against the national standards and regulations. Each state and territory regulatory authority has responsibility for assessing and rating ECEC services in their jurisdiction. Similarly, many states in the **United States** use on Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) to differentiate between different levels of quality, help parents identify high-quality care, and support providers in improving their quality. The QRIS differs from the Australia model in that standards are determined at the state level rather than at the national level, and most states have a voluntary QRIS. States typically rate child care providers on a scale of 1-3 or 1-5 using stars or another consumer-friendly method. Some states include indicators of workforce quality and working conditions, such as adult-to-child ratios, provider experience and/or education level, and standardised measures of the ECEC environment (i.e., Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scales).

56. The workgroup did not find many examples of attempts to measure and monitor the quality of the workforce using standardised tools. One exception is a new policy in the **United States**. The Head Start programme recently started using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) to evaluate all classrooms during a triennial review. The CLASS measures teacher-child interaction on three scales: classroom organisation, emotional support and instructional support. Performance on the CLASS is linked to better child academic performance in early primary school. Programmes that score in the bottom 10% on any of the three scales must compete for funding amongst other ECEC providers in their geographic area that apply for funding. Head Start programmes also receive training on the CLASS and assistance in improving their scores.

**Questions for discussion**

- Which countries monitor staff performance, and at what level and for what reasons?
- In these countries, how do we know whether or not certain policy interventions work to improve staff quality?
- What kinds of indicators are used to indicate, in particular, “staff performance”?
- Other than staff performance, what are the other indicators used to monitor workforce quality?
- Other than monitoring, what policies have been implemented to improve workforce quality?
Chapter 5: Opportunities for improvement and next steps

57. Monitoring workforce quality and staff performance is a new policy area for many countries in the workgroup. While an important factor in determining the overall quality of ECEC environments and their impact on children’s well-being and learning, monitoring workforce quality presents challenges and opportunities for improvement. Understanding what aspects of workforce quality matter most and accurately assessing these components are key to improving the overall quality of the workforce. The working group identified several topics for future exploration:

Cost effectiveness and understanding what works

58. Most countries are facing tough economic circumstances, and the potential to expand funding for monitoring workforce quality is limited. Identifying the most cost effective approaches to improving the workforce and monitoring workforce quality is critical to make the most of limited funding. For instance, understanding how often to monitor, the most effective monitoring practices and effective interventions will be critical questions over the coming years. The evidence on effective workforce monitoring practices is limited; additional research on the most effective practices would help countries put funds where they are most likely to be successful.

Monitoring workforce quality for children under age three and child care

59. Many countries have strong training, professional development programmes, and initial education requirements for staff working with children from ages three to six. However, several countries reported low formal education and training requirements for those working in child care settings. This is particularly problematic for children under age three. As countries consider options for monitoring workforce quality, it is important to consider appropriate measures for very young children and those in child care settings.

Professionalization of the ECEC workforce

60. Early childhood education and care needs to be recognised as a profession which requires specialist skills and knowledge to support child development. The workgroup members believe that enhancing the professional status of the ECEC workforce will assist in attracting and retaining suitably qualified educators. To this end, monitoring the workforce can help enhance professionalism by applying high standards and ensuring a minimum level of quality, thus dispelling notions that the ECEC workforce lacks skills, knowledge and training.

Enhancing capacity to serve diverse children, families and members of the ECEC workforce

61. Many OECD countries are becoming increasingly diverse, and ECEC services must be responsive. In terms of monitoring the workforce, monitoring protocols should meet the needs of diverse staff members and be reliable and valid across cultures and languages. They should also measure how responsive the staff is to diverse families and children. The results of monitoring activities should be available and accessible to parents in their native language.

62. **Australia** implemented a national Early Years Workforce Strategy in September 2012. Focusing on the skills and attributes of high-quality early childhood educators, the Strategy complements, and builds upon, existing Commonwealth, state and territory government measures aimed at improving the supply and quality of the ECEC workforce. One priority area of the Strategy is to foster the creation of a responsive workforce, one which can address the needs of all children through enhancing the capability of educators to meet the needs of children from diverse social and cultural backgrounds and developing the capability of
ECEC educators to further develop skills in working with children with diverse needs. The success indicators for a responsive workforce include:

- Improved ECEC outcomes for disadvantaged children and families in ECEC,
- Increased level of cultural competency for ECEC educators,
- Increased proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators,
- Increased capabilities of ECEC educators to identify and appropriately assist children with diverse needs,
- Improved Australian Early Development Index which is a national collection of information on young children’s development, and
- Improved service provider knowledge of the staff skill set and where to access training.

**Engaging parents**

63. Parents are an important part of the monitoring process. It is important that parents understand workforce monitoring efforts and be informed of their results. Approaches such as the QRIS in the United States rely on parents’ use of ratings to create demand for higher quality ECEC. Parents’ support for workforce monitoring is important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions for discussion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For countries that monitor workforce quality, what challenges and barriers have you faced?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What lessons learned or best practices would you like to share?</td>
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<tr>
<td>For countries that do not monitor workforce quality, is there a policy desire to do so?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What barriers have you encountered in implementing policies to monitor the workforce?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What kind of information should be collected on monitoring staff performance in the new project?</td>
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</tbody>
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## APPENDIX

### Table 1. Provision of initial education for child care and pre-primary staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Integrated</th>
<th>Split</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic*, Denmark, Finland,</td>
<td>Australia, Belgium, British Columbia (CAN), Germany,</td>
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<td>Republic*, Sweden**</td>
<td>Norway**, Poland, Prince Edward Island (CAN), Slovenia,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Scotland (UKM)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Belgium refers to the Flemish Community and French Community of Belgium. * Students follow the same education programme, but a specialisation in either child care or pre-primary education is added to the initial education programme. ** Data on New Zealand refers to Education and Care teachers only, excluding play centre leaders. Data on Norway refers to child/youth workers and pedagogical leaders who have a different initial education. Data on Sweden refers to preschool teachers only who work with one-to-seven-year-olds.


### Table 2. Provision of initial education for pre-primary and primary teaching staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Integrated</th>
<th>Split</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia*, Austria, British Columbia</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(CAN), Denmark, England (UKM),</td>
<td>Korea, Norway, Sweden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France, Ireland, Netherlands, Poland</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: * Students follow the same education programme, but a specialisation in either child care or pre-primary education is added to the initial education programme.


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2 Integrated initial education: initial education for child care and pre-primary staff is integrated; students follow the same education, *i.e.*, students are being educated for working in child care and the early education sector (although a further specialisation for either child care or early education might exist within the programme). Split initial education: initial education for child care and pre-primary staff is split: they do not follow the same education and are trained separately. Data refers to centre-based ECEC workers only (excluding family day care workers).

3 Integrated initial teaching education: initial education for pre-primary and primary teaching staff is integrated; students follow the same education, *i.e.*, students are being educated for teaching in pre-primary and primary schooling (although a further specialisation for either pre-primary or primary might exist within the programme). Split initial teaching education: initial education for pre-primary and primary teaching staff is split: they do not follow the same education and are trained separately.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


