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Network on Early Childhood Education and Care

POLICIES AND PRACTICES ON MONITORING STAFF QUALITY AND THE USE OF STAFF-LEVEL SURVEYS

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This paper contains an overview of existing instruments to measure/ monitor staff quality, which are used in Korea, Wallonia-Brussels Federation (Belgium), Australia, and the Netherlands.

Contributors to this paper include: Ms. Ann Twyman (Australia), Ms. Florence Pirard (Wallonia-Brussels Federation of Belgium), Dr. Dongju Shin (Korea) and Ms. Wytse Boomsma (Netherlands) who is the moderator of this thematic working group on "workforce". The paper was edited and finalized by Ineke Litjens (OECD).

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1. Staff surveys

Australia

3. Australia has a nation-wide survey of early childhood education and care services and individual staff and educators in place: the National Workforce Census. Data is collected in two parts: the first part involves the collection of information from pre-school services and approved child care services on their settings. ECEC services are asked about:

- Service usage
- Children with additional needs
- Access to pre-school programmes
- Staff details, such as employment details, roles and responsibilities, years of experience, highest qualifications, and professional development training of educators and staff members at the service.

4. The second part of the Census is a separate questionnaire distributed to ECEC staff. It collects information from individuals regarding their:

- Roles
- Qualifications
- Employment status
- Training activities
- Pay and other working conditions
- Career intentions.

5. To assist quality and consistency of data collection across the first and second parts, there are similarities between the workforce information requested from service providers and from individual staff members. All Workforce Census data is collected using a self-completion methodology, with the predominant modes being online surveys for child care services, hard copy self-completion surveys for pre-school services, and hard copy self-completion surveys for the Individual Staff Survey. More information about the Workforce Census can be obtained from <http://deewr.gov.au/national-early-childhood-education-and-care-workforce-census>.

Korea

6. In Korea, staff quality in pre-school/kindergartens is being monitored every three years through the use of survey evaluations of the level of service provided. This survey includes a section on staff quality. Local/Municipal Offices of Education send out the survey to the kindergartens, and they also analyse and evaluate the results of the survey, and share the evaluation outcomes with the kindergartens.

2. Staff observations

Australia

7. In Australia, an assessment and rating system has been put in place, as part of the National Quality Framework which consists of National Quality Standards, to drive continuous improvement in the quality of the early childhood education and care services. The responsibility of carrying out assessment and rating processes is a matter for state and territory governments. The information is collected by authorised officers only, is through an external evaluation (inspection). They use 'observe', 'discuss' and 'sight' techniques to assess the service against each element of the National Quality Standard and the National Regulations. The results of the evaluations are made available to the public.

8. The officers conducting the assessments observe what children, educators and staff members are doing (for example: engaging in caring, friendly and respectful interactions), can engage with staff members about the practices in the service, and can also look into documentation used by ECEC staff such as the ECEC setting's Quality Improvement Plan. Each service up for assessment is required to develop such a plan which involves a self-evaluation exercise of the quality of the service, a self-assessment on whether it meets the National Quality Standard, and a self-assessment of aspects which should and can be improved.

9. With regard to staff quality in particular, the National Quality Framework has set out new minimum qualification requirements for educators working in children's education and care services. These qualification requirements are being implemented between 2012 and 2020 and will align more closely with the National Quality Framework. Details of the new qualifications are available at <http://www.training.gov.au>.

10. To oversee the consistent implementation and administration of the National Quality Framework, an independent statutory authority, 'Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority' (ACECQA: <http://www.acecqa.gov.au/>), was established in 2012. Its role is to provide national leadership and to promote quality and continuous improvement in education and care services in Australia.

Korea

11. In child care provisions, the Korea Childcare Accreditation Council, a national agency, makes use of inspections to monitor the level of quality of a setting or provision. The agency conducts inspection visits and assesses, based on the visits, whether the child care centre can receive a formal accreditation. The inspection process for child care centres consists of evaluations of written documents used in the ECEC setting such as daily curricula and planning schedules in place, and an inspection visit which focuses on the following aspects:

- The child care environment
- Administration and management
- Curriculum in place
- Interactions between staff and children
- Health and nutrition conditions
- Safety
- Cooperation of the centre with family and community.
- If the centre passes the evaluation inspection, it receives an accreditation for three years.

12. Korea also makes use of inspections to monitor staff quality in **kindergartens**. Inspectors from the Local Office of Education visit kindergartens regularly to monitor the quality of practices, such as:

- The curriculum
- Educational environment
- Health and safety conditions
- Administration and management.

13. Based on the inspection results, advice and recommendations are given to staff to improve their performance.

14. Inspections in Korea consist of three parts. First, a self-evaluation is conducted by the kindergarten. Second, a written report is prepared by the kindergarten (written by teachers and directors) which is sent to the evaluation committee. And the third step includes site visits (inspections/observations) to the kindergarten. The inspections usually last two days and consist of observation practices as well as interviews with the staff and parents. Based on these observations, the committee evaluates their performance through the use of rating scales. Evaluation committee members receive training for this on:

- The inspection and evaluation work they are expected to do
- The process of site visits
- The criteria for evaluation

- Interpretation of evaluation results and findings.

15. During inspections, staff quality is being monitored as well. Within this aspect, attention is paid to:

- The preparation and provision of age- and child-appropriate learning environments that meet children's needs and interests
- The quality of interactions with children
- The quality of interactions with other children
- The quality of interactions within the environment
- The support provided to children in interactions.

16. If a child care provision or kindergarten indicates it needs additional professional support and advice after the inspection/evaluation reports have been finished, they can ask to the Local Education Office for additional support. The main purpose of Korea's monitoring practices is to improve the level of quality of service and the quality of instructions given by staff.

The Netherlands

17. Staff quality in the Netherlands is mainly monitored through the use of inspections with separate inspections in place for ECEC programmes for disadvantaged children in particular. Additional staff quality standards apply for these programmes

Kindergartens/pre-schools

18. In the Netherlands, there is a national framework in place for the organization of early education. This framework sets out guidelines for ECEC managers and staff, and includes information on:

- Guidelines and legislation on ECEC standards, for example on:
 - - Group size
 - - Staff qualifications
 - - Teacher to child ratio
- The development goals to be reached by children of, and at, a certain age
- A set of quality standards and a system of quality assurance to assure the quality goals are met.

19. Within this framework, staff quality is being monitored. These inspections focus on whether pre-schools and kindergartens comply with the law. The tools used for inspections are observations of staff, as well talking (and asking questions) to staff. Through these techniques, an understanding on staff work with children is being developed. The evaluations of these inspections will be written down in an inspection report. Besides the quality of staff, inspections focus on:

- parental involvement;
- safety and health;
- quality of accommodation and facilities;
- group size and child-teacher ratio;
- pedagogical policy and practice in place.

20. Sanctions can be put in place if provisions do not comply with the law and legislations.

21. Staff satisfaction surveys and self-evaluation practices are used in the Netherlands as well, but not at national level.

ECEC programmes for disadvantaged children

22. The Netherlands have specific ECEC programmes in place for disadvantaged children, and additional quality standards are in place for staff working with these children. These standards for staff quality are listed in the table below. The Inspectorate of Education recently visited all locations that provide these specific ECEC programmes for disadvantaged children. The inspection concluded that the pedagogical climate is excellent in these programmes but that parental involvement should be strengthened, as well as the link between pre-schools and schools. Each setting providing these ECEC programmes receive a report indicating which aspects need improvement.

23. Regarding staff quality, inspections focus on:

Quality of the education

– **The program offered**

- An integral VVE (ECEC for disadvantaged children) programme
- Working with target-oriented planning
- The supply of activities aimed at language development is sufficiently
- The level of difficulty of the supply increases and there is differentiation

– **Pedagogic climate**

- Respectful actions by the teachers
- Clear pedagogic behaviour limits
- Stimulating the social skills of the children
- Stimulation of the independence of the children
- Decoration of the room

– **Educational actions**

- Reconciliation of the educational actions of the teachers with one another
- Programmatic approach to language development
- Stimulating interaction between the children
- Active involvement of the children
- Development of active behaviour by the children
- (Language) behaviour of the teachers is responsive
- Adjusting to level differences between children

Development, coaching and care

- **Development, coaching and care within the group**
 - Monitoring the development of all children
 - Determining the coaching for the whole group, the small / tutor group, the individual child
 - The evaluation of the coaching and care offered
 - Specific attention to 'language'
- **Embedding in the wider chain of care**
 - Teachers know the children who need external care
 - Teachers stimulate the use of external care if that is desired
 - The teachers continue to monitor the development of children with extra care

24. The Inspectorate agrees in principle annually, in collaboration with a municipality, which locations and subjects will be inspected. The Inspectorate itself may also decide to perform supervision/inspections at certain locations and/or on certain ECEC subjects. Again, self-evaluation practices are in place in ECEC programmes for disadvantaged children although not at national level.

Workforce data and data on level of quality

25. Every three years, the NCKO (Nederlands Consortium Kinderopvang Onderzoek – Dutch consortium on Child Care Research), collects data on quality within a representative sample of kindergartens at central level. Data is collected on aspects like:

- interactions between teachers and pupils
- Support provided to children regarding language development
- The teaching of subjects such as fine motoring skills, physical play, music, and science interaction between children
- Staff characteristics such as age, years of experience in kindergarten, experience in the group of children they are working with
- Group size
- Level of education.

26. This data provides insights into how the level of (staff) quality is developing over time, and this information serves as inputs for new policies and practices to improve the quality in early education.

Wallonia-Brussels Federation

27. Inspections in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation are in place to evaluate and monitor the overall level of quality and education, not the quality or performance of each ECEC professional. During inspections, attention is being paid to the implementation of the competencies for ECEC staff. However, the competencies for staff in child care and family day care have not yet been very well specified. What are regarded as important aspects of staff quality are teamwork and team meetings, and inspections therefore pay close attention to these aspects.

28. All ECEC professionals are required to draft action plans ('le plan d'amélioration de la qualité') which include proposals and goals on how to improve the quality in their setting and the quality of their own practices and performance, and how they plan to achieve these goals. The goals in the plans should be in alignment with the Federation's goals for quality child care as laid down in the 'Quality Code' ('Code de qualité et de l'accueil'). Because team work is often regarded as a useful method in improving practices and performance, this aspect is usually carefully monitored and evaluated during inspections.

29. Child care settings and their action plans are being evaluated every three years by ONE. If the action plans are evaluated as being insufficiently contributing to improving quality and are not aligned with the goals as laid down in the 'Quality Code', public funding can be decreased or withdrawn. The results of these evaluations are not publically published, but form the basis of an "attestation de qualité" – a proof which shows that a setting meets the federation's quality conditions.

30. To support settings and professionals in reaching their goals as set out in their action plans, in-service training programmes are offered to people in ECEC settings. These training programmes are either offered in a training institution, but can also be given within a setting. Many of the training programmes focus on improving team work and team management.

31. The required competencies for staff in kindergarten are laid down in a law (Decrete FI 2000 –MB 19/01/2001) and refer to competences which are believed to contribute towards good staff performance. When inspections take place, the inspectors pay attention to the implementation of these competencies. The competencies include, among others, aspects such as:

1. Maintaining effective partnership relations with institutions, colleagues, and pupils' parents;
2. Developing the relevant skills in accordance with the profession's requirements;
3. Understanding the ethical issues associated with daily practices of an ECEC professional;
4. Collaborating within a team.

32. The currently existing competencies do not refer, or apply to, individual ECEC professionals only. They are also relevant and important for the institution/setting itself since the settings is expected to develop and strengthen these competencies and carry these out. Governing bodies of the preschools are expected to support the development of these competencies and skills. Directors of ECEC settings can also conduct individual staff performance evaluations, which can result into an evaluation report although this is not being implemented at national level.