Network on Early Childhood Education and Care

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 8TH MEETING OF THE OECD NETWORK ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE: STANDARDS, CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY

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1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The Network ADOPTED the agenda.

2. ADOPTION OF THE SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 7TH MEETING

2. The Network ADOPTED the summary record of the 7th meeting.

3. OPENING REMARKS

3. Ms. Barbara Ischinger, Director of the Education Department, welcomed the participants. She reflected on the Ministerial meeting held in November 2010 which focused on challenges in investing in human and social capital and stressed that ECEC provides a critical foundation for human development.

4. Ms. Deborah Roseveare, Head of the Education and Training Policy Division, presented general information about the network, and underlined the objectives of the meeting.

5. INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME OF THE MEETING: STANDARDS, CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY

5. Ms. Miho Taguma, Project Leader of the ECEC Network and the ECEC Quality project in the Education and Training Policy Division, gave an overview of country approaches to standards, curriculum and pedagogy based on the responses to the questionnaire. She further outlined issues to be discussed in sessions 5-7. For session 5, she gave an overview of different types of frameworks. She pointed out that while frameworks vary across countries such as in age coverage, degree of detail and new content areas, there are commonalities across different frameworks such as in objectives and principles and some key content areas. Major challenges in designing a framework were presented, including defining the scope of contents, and choosing an approach (input-based or outcome-based) to designing a framework. For session 6 addresses the need for new approaches and innovative models to changes in society, family structure, demographics, and skills and competencies required for future industries and labour market. For session 7, she gave an overview of the major challenges countries face when implementing a curriculum framework and the strategies they used to address these challenges. She concluded by presenting financial indicators for participants to reflect upon financial feasibility to carry out a curriculum reform and implementation, with the current and foreseen government budget constraints.

6. STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM: THEORIES AND BEHIND

6. This session focused on theories and values underpinning the development of standards and curriculum.
7. Mr. Hans Cohen de Lara, researcher at Sardes social policy research institute in the Netherlands, explained that curiosity and executive functions are key to a child's learning and development. He also gave a brief overview of the concept of a 'living curriculum'. A successful "living curriculum" will require: 1) quality interaction between staff and child; 2) adequate content per development domain, and 3) creating and seizing the moment. He explained that several moments occur through the day which provide opportunities for early learning. These moments either come about when the ECEC professional consciously introduces planned learning activities, or can occur when the professional enriches daily routines, random events or situations children initiate. In other words, learning moments can not only be created but may be seized as well. In both cases, it is important that a professional encourages children's curiosity and development by asking the right questions, giving explanations, and stimulate discussion. He emphasised that how effectively the professional responds in these situations depends to a large extent on good training and coaching.

8. Mr. Manuel Achten (Luxembourg) explained briefly the ECEC system in Luxembourg. Ms. Claude Sevenig (Luxembourg) presented the six educational domains of pre-primary education for 3 and 4 year olds. The Luxembourgian and other languages form an important aspect since many different languages are used in Luxembourg. The curriculum and pedagogical guidelines for early education include information on the tasks of the teacher, the learning approaches and strategies, the exchange of information, and the documentation of the development of the child. The guidelines emphasise that the child's needs and interests are placed at the centre of learning.

9. Mr. Charles Chan and Ms. Pik San Leong (Singapore) presented the desired outcomes for preschool education in Singapore, and explained that the Singapore's kindergarten curriculum framework is based on the dispositions, knowledge and skills each child should acquire. The holistic development of the child is regarded as very important. Teachers in Singapore are considered as supporters of learning, planners, and as facilitators of learning – which is reflected in the country's teaching and learning principles.

10. Ms. Marcela Hanusova (Slovak Republic) explained that the Slovakian philosophy of the ECEC curriculum titled 'Child and the world' is based on domestic and international educational research work, practical experience, and different pedagogical theories. The child is perceived as an active learner in Slovakia. Research and pedagogical theories have influenced the core competencies, educational standards, the arrangement of daily activities, and the organisation of pre-school teaching in ECEC institutions.

11. The small group discussions indicated that countries face similar challenges regarding curriculum and standard setting. Many countries face difficulties in whether to include child outcomes in curricula, how to assess child outcomes, how to involve parents or communities, and how to link research to curriculum frameworks. An important strategy for several countries in facing these challenges was to allocate (extra) funding to revise curricula, use research, or involve and inform parents and communities more. It was also pointed out that staff training was an important aspect of understanding and implementing curriculum, and communicating about the curricula and/or standards.

12. The session focused on identifying key features among new approaches and innovative models in standard setting and/or curriculum development and addressing the challenges in designing new and/or innovative approaches.
13. Dr. Thomas Moser, professor at the Vestfold University College in Norway, presented the Norwegian framework plan for the content and tasks of kindergartens. Pedagogy is in Norway (and the other Nordic countries) explicitly seen as an ethical, values-driven activity and the curriculum framework represents a holistic approach to caring, upbringing and learning with a primacy of play. The main focus is on social competencies, care, play and learning in a broad sense. There is considerable resistance to result goals, all kind of "school-models" and school-practices, such as e.g. testing and assessments that rank young children. Norway's curriculum framework has been revised in 2005 and the revised framework plan is much shorter than the previous one, which reflects the Ministry's intention to make a clearer plan that speaks easily to the academic and non-academic reader. Critics of Norway's pedagogical approach believe that the development of more detailed plan is a prerequisite to provide better quality ECEC services. However, a Green Paper published in October 2010 providing knowledge-based advice on ECEC practices, proposes, in addition to a few changes, to continue within a 'Nordic model paradigm'.

14. Mr. David Istance, senior analyst at the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), presented the main findings of Trends Shaping Education 2010. He explained that the trends shaping current education are the dynamics of globalisation; the evolving social challenges; the changing world of work; the transformation of childhood; and the increasing importance of ICT. He also gave an overview of CERI's work on innovative learning environments, which uses research to inspire practices.

15. Ms. Claudia Striffler explained, on behalf of Dr. Peter Rösner, the mission of the Little Scientists' House. The foundation, which is a public-private partnership, aims at providing children in day care centres and primary schools with opportunities to develop their interest in, and knowledge of, science and technology. The Little Scientists' House provides all child care workers with professional development opportunities in the form of workshops, working documents, and information on their website. Additionally, the organisation attempts to involve parents more in the early education of their children, and to increase their interest in scientific subjects.

16. Ms. Margaret Pearce, on behalf of Mr. Michael Manthorpe (Australia), explained that Australia's Early Years Learning Framework 'Belonging, Being and Becoming' is Australia's first national early childhood learning framework. The Framework describes the broad parameters, principles and outcomes required to support and enhance young children's learning from birth to 5 years of age, as well as their transition to school. The Framework attempts to ensure that the needs of Australia's multi-cultural community are met. She explained that an effective political structure and process was required to develop national agreement and implementation. She further pointed out that receiving feedback from the ECEC sector was critically important, as well as regularly communicating with them, providing training and implementation support to them. Australia's key strategy for implementing the Framework is through the new National Quality Standard which comprises quality areas, standards and elements, and is linked to a quality ratings system.

17. Ms. Nada Pozar Matijasic (Slovenia), explained that the country experienced several challenges in ensuring horizontal linkages through participation of all relevant stakeholders including involving parents in early education, and ensuring vertical linkages such as enhancing the co-operation between pre-schools and schools. Other challenges were the provision of appropriate materials for implementation, ensuring a smooth transition from pre-school to compulsory schooling, and providing information to, and training of, pre-school and school teachers. To overcome these challenges, Slovenia appointed a National Curriculum Council and a system of commissions, organised in-service training and gradually implemented the new curriculum for pre-schools (1999).

18. Ms. Mugyeong Moon (Korea) presented a case study of city governments' initiative of providing experiential learning programmes, as well as in-service teacher training, support research on ECEC, and information to the parents. The centres also provide services to children with special needs, have multi-
media rooms for teachers to improve their skills, provide online counselling, and rent materials for free to professionals. The city governments are allocating its own budgets to these centres.

19. During the small group discussions, countries indicated that a lack of political will for revising an approach or implementing a new curriculum was experienced as a serious challenge, as well as a lack of funding for innovation, and how to communicate to professionals and parents about a new curriculum. Countries also struggle with finding a balance in including very detailed information in a curriculum versus flexibility to adapt a curriculum. Different strategies have been taken to tackle these challenges: some countries trained teachers with help from more experienced teachers while others use different documentation/communication methods to inform parents and professionals about new curricula. It was concluded that too much detail within a curriculum can make it more difficult for practitioners and managers to adapt it to local needs, that evaluating a curriculum might contribute to a more efficient approach and that support in implementation of curriculum and communication about a curriculum is important.

7. IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

20. The session focused on challenges and strategies concerning implementation of standards and curriculum.

21. Dr. Jiaxiong Zhu, professor at the East China Normal University, explained that many new curricula have been developed at province, city, or pre-school level and that the curriculum approaches are becoming more diverse. One of the challenges China is facing when implementing curricula is to what extent Western pedagogical ideas should be implemented versus Chinese traditional ideas. Additionally, China is experiencing large regional, and with this economic, differences in ECEC. There is also a large inconsistency between pedagogical philosophies and schools' examination systems, and there is a discrepancy between the requirements for curriculum implementation and professionals' educational level which is generally low in China. For these reasons, the Chinese government has set up the National Action Plan for Implementation for 2010-2020. In line with this Plan, teachers will receive training and support in curriculum implementation, and curricula will be evaluated.

22. Mr. Richard Walley (New Zealand), explained that the 'Te Whāriki' curriculum framework was mandated in law in 2008. The challenges the country faced in implementation, when this began in 1996, were the insufficient skills of professionals to implement the curriculum, the diversity of ECEC services in New Zealand, and the move towards bi-culturalism in the country. Strategies to overcome these challenges included setting up several research initiatives, professionalising the sector with central funding for more highly qualified staff, and evaluating and monitoring the sector. As a result, 'Te Whāriki' has a strong relationship with the New Zealand School Curriculum, and there is a high level of awareness of the 'Te Whāriki' curriculum framework. However, the effectiveness of the framework is still difficult to evaluate.

23. Dr. Rafael Bonete Perales, on behalf of Ms. Maria Teresa Salinas García (Spain), gave an overview of the debate on education reform in Spain. The subjects for discussion included the prevention of inequalities, the key skills for the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, implementation of societal values, the role of teachers and schools and centres. There was a public debate organised on this, as well as roundtables and conferences in which educational stakeholders could participate. Additionally, a website was set up on which discussion forums were organised. The public discussions were followed by a parliamentary debate, which led in 2006 to the Law of Education and resulted in a timetable for implementation of the national law and substantial public investment for implementation.
24. Ms. Silvana Marra (Italy) explained that Italy has national quality standards for institutions for 0-3 year old children, and has a curriculum for 3-6 year olds. The challenges in Italy were to offer a public inter-institutional socio-educational service to all children, to provide support to children's parents, and to ensure educational development opportunities for all children in ECEC. Local front offices assisted in ensuring these goals, and additional funding was provided for this.

25. Dr. Jacqueline Jones (United States) explained that the United States focuses its education around multiple domains: physical health and well-being, socio-emotional development, learning approaches, language and literacy, and cognitive skills. However, there is no national curriculum for ECEC and no national 0-5 years learning standards, although all 50 states each have their own pre-school learning standards and 26 states have infant/toddler early learning guidelines. The federal government does give some broad recommendations to states regarding standards and curriculum. She explained that the goal of ECEC in the U.S. is to prepare all children for primary school, and the sector is mainly state and locally funded. The challenges the United States are facing are improving the training and professional development of teachers, correctly implementing a curriculum, engaging families in children's education, and aligning curriculum with standards and assessments.

26. During the small group discussions, countries indicated that they struggle with implementing curricula at a local level and centre level. They also face challenges in ensuring curricula include the societal values, and to ensure that professionals are capable of implementing curricula. Many countries made use of in-service training, mentoring or coaching approaches for professionals. Other solutions were giving implementation guidance through websites, folders, reports, and booklets. Sufficient budget for implementation was found to be an important factor for successful implementation, as well giving implementation sufficient time since it is found to be very time consuming and labour intensive work. Countries also pointed out that not only professionals, but also management of ECEC centres should be involved in implementation, and that a follow-up of the implementation process is useful.

27. The session focused on a presentation of the on-going work on, and the completed sections of, the ECEC portal.

28. Ms. Claire Miguet, statistician in the Education and Training Policy Division, presented the framework for the ECEC portal. She explained that the portal is built around 4 main topics: general and contextual information; governance and structure; policy input; and policy outcomes. She gave an overview of the items that are included in the portal and presented the currently available data and completed sections. She explained that the responses to the Survey for the Quality Project and ECEC Portal will provide the Secretariat with further information for the portal.

29. Countries appreciated the efforts of the Secretariat to pool data on ECEC from different OECD sources into one portal. Countries indicated that it is important that data is being updated as soon as recent data is available. The Secretariat confirms that data will be updated and informs participants that the portal will be first used as an internal working tool. After country validation of the data and country's permission, the information can be made available online.

30. The session focused on informing countries of the on-going survey for the quality toolbox and the ECEC portal, and the next steps in the project.
31. Ms. Deborah Roseveare gave a brief overview of the results of PISA 2009, including the relationship between participation in pre-primary education and PISA outcomes at the age of 15. Data from PISA 2009 indicate that in all OECD countries, students who attended pre-primary education for more than 1 year outperformed students who have not attended pre-school for at least 1 year, even after socio-economic background was accounted for.

32. Ms. Miho Taguma reported on the progress on the Policy Toolbox, the Policy Profiles, the Policy Forum, and the final roundtable discussion of the project. She informed the Network that the survey for the quality project and portal has gone through a pilot run and thanked the countries and experts who took part in the pilot. She invited countries to respond to the survey to enrich the data and information of the quality project and the portal. Additionally, she presented an example of a Policy Profile, which is a self-contained policy package with data and analysis relevant to the focus selected by countries. She then informed the Network of the preparatory visits to Korea and Portugal for their Policy Forum. She also shared some preliminary ideas on the final roundtable discussion which is expected to take place in December 2011 or January 2012 as a closure to the 'encouraging quality in ECEC' project. The roundtable will focus on quality in ECEC and implementation. She welcomed countries to contact the Secretariat about any ideas they have regarding the final roundtable discussion.

10. COMMUNICATION OUTLINE

33. Ms. Kelly Makowiecki, assistant in the Education and Training Policy Division, presented the different ways in which the Secretariat communicates with the ECEC Network and the general public, including e-mail, Clearspace and the public website. She demonstrated visually how Clearspace works, and what kind of documents can be found on Clearspace and the public website. Additionally, she informed the Network about the Education and Training Policy Alert which consists of an email with updates on projects in the Education and Training Policy Division and the social media sources the Education Directorate is using.

34. Before documents are being de-classified, the Secretariat posts a notification about this on Clearspace. When countries do not want certain documents to be de-classified, they can object on this through Clearspace. Several countries indicated that since responses to the network questionnaires include raw data, they prefer the responses not to become publically available on the website. The Secretariat pointed out that that when countries prefer certain documents not to be declassified; these documents will not be made available on the public website.

11. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

35. Through written procedures, we have received a resignation notice from:

   • Ms. Kari Jacobsen (Norway)
   • Mr. François Weldon (Canada)

36. The Network elected the following officers to the bureau of the Network:

   • Dr. Jacqueline Jones (United States) – Chair
   • Ms. Tove Mogstad Slinde (Norway) – Vice Chair

12. THE WAY FORWARD

37. Ms. Kari Jacobsen, the Chair of the Network, announced that the theme for the next meeting is 'Parental and Community Engagement'. The meeting is scheduled for 4-5 July 2011 in Paris, followed by an informal meeting on 6 July. She concluded that the topic of the meeting was highly relevant for policy-
makers, since some countries are focusing more on outcomes, while others are more practice-orientated.
She commented that sharing internal information, expert perspectives and country experiences on 'standards, curriculum, and pedagogy' was a constructive way to gather useful knowledge and learn from other’s practices. She invited countries to answer to portal and quality project's survey before February 15, 2011, and invited them to suggest ideas for the final roundtable discussion.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

38. The Secretariat and the Network thanked Ms. Kari Jacobsen (Norway) for chairing the Network for two years, and for all her time and support she putted into making the Network a success.
Participants List for Network on Early Childhood Education and Care
Liste des Participants pour Réseau sur l’accueil et l’éducation des jeunes enfants
6/12/2010 - 7/12/2010

All Sessions

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