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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARK, WORKFORCE/SUPPLY, QUALIFICATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT

Wednesday, 25 November to Thursday, 26 November 2009

Delegates are invited to discuss ways to tackle the issues identified concerning the ECEC workforce addressing in particular the following questions:

- 1. What measures can sovernments kealistically implement to improve the ECEC workforce?
- 2. How can governments manage the cost of policies to raise the quality of the workforce when government budgets are strained.
- 3. How far should governments to towards regulating for minimum qualifications and working conditions?
- 4. Would greater infegration or harmonisation of ECEC services within countries make it easier to address workforce challenges?
- 5/ What are the major challenges and constraints in implementing initiatives to improve workforce supply, qualifications and development?

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ECEC WORKFORCE SUPPLY, QUALIFICATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT

Summary

- 1. Workforce supply, qualifications and development play a crucial role in determining the quality of early childhood education and care (ECEC) services. However, the ECEC sector is quite fragmented and diversified in most countries with different services and structures.
- 2. The workforce in ECEC reflects this diversity and fragmentation, with a variety of positions with different training and qualifications profiles and different working conditions. In a number of countries, a significant share of the ECEC workforce is either low qualified or unqualified.
- 3. Many countries report major challenges in workforce supply including:
 - chronic shortages of teachers and staff, especially in remote and disadvantaged areas
 - high staff turnover rates, especially in the child care sector
 - low levels of qualifications
 - homogeneity of the workforce (female, young and from the majority ethnic group)
- 4. Several factors make working in the sector unattractive, such as low wages, low social status, heavy workload and lack of career progression paths.
- 5. Many countries present a complex picture of staff profiles and qualifications across the ECEC workforce. Most countries have a mix of vocational and academic qualifications: these may be integrated within a qualifications framework, disconnected or overlapping.
- 6. All countries offer some types of professional development opportunities. But these opportunities are not always taken up. And continuous training and professional development is often disconnected from initial teacher education.
- 7. Delegates are invited to discuss ways to tackle the issues identified concerning the ECEC workforce addressing in particular the following questions:
 - 1. What measures can governments realistically implement to improve the ECEC workforce?
 - 2. How can governments manage the cost of policies to raise the quality of the workforce when government budgets are strained?
 - 3. How far should governments go towards regulating for minimum qualifications and working conditions?
 - 4. Would greater integration or harmonisation of ECEC services within countries make it easier to address workforce challenges?
 - 5. What are the major challenges and constraints in implementing initiatives to improve workforce supply, qualifications and development?

ECEC WORKFORCE SUPPLY, QUALIFICATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT

- 1. Workforce supply, qualifications and development play a crucial role in determining the quality of early childhood education and care (ECEC) services. The thematic review of ECEC -- *Starting Strong I and II* (OECD, 2001 and 2006) -- stressed the importance of a well-educated workforce, with a high level of qualifications and formal, specialised training in early childhood education. It noted that:
 - Quality of ECEC is linked to strong training and supportive working conditions for staff
 - Young children develop better language skills when ECEC services are staffed by well-educated and qualified personnel
 - Staff with more formal education and more specialised early childhood training may engage in more stimulating, warm and supportive interactions with children.
- 2. However, one of the challenges in ECEC is the often fragmented nature of the sector. In some countries, child care arrangements are treated separately from early education and are under different regulatory arrangements and ministerial responsibilities. Other countries have integrated services with one lead ministry that is responsible for both early education and care policies. The spread of responsibilities across levels of government and the mix of public and private providers can further complicate the sector.
- 3. The workforce in ECEC reflects this diversity and fragmentation, with a variety of positions with different training and qualifications profiles and different working conditions. In a number of countries, a significant share of the ECEC workforce is either low qualified or unqualified.
- 4. At its meeting in May 2009, the OECD Network on Early Childhood Education and Care considered the main policy challenges countries are facing on workforce supply, qualifications, and development; the factors at play that can explain these challenges; and the policy responses/strategies that can effectively address these challenges. This note summarises the main findings collected from 18 countries¹ through a questionnaire (see EDU/EDPC(2009)19/ANN1.) and provides some examples of initiatives countries have taken.

Challenges and factors at play

Workforce supply

5. Many countries report major challenges in workforce supply (see Table 1), including chronic shortages of teachers and staff, especially in remote and disadvantaged areas; high staff turnover rates, especially in the child care sector; low levels of qualifications and homogeneity of the workforce, who are mostly female, young and from the majority ethnic group. Countries cited several factors that make working in the sector unattractive, such as low wages; low social status; heavy workload; and lack of career progression paths.

Qualifications

- 6. Many countries present a complex picture of staff profiles and qualifications across the ECEC workforce, which may span a range of different care settings. Most countries have a mix of vocational and academic qualifications and these may be more or less interconnected, for example, through a national qualifications framework. Overlapping qualification requirements in different parts of the sector and a mix of pathways can lead to confusion.
- 7. Some countries are working on developing new profiles and qualifications that will require more relevant skills for today's ECEC settings. Others are re-arranging qualifications to simplify the pathways into the profession. In countries with a national qualifications framework, ECEC workers and students can

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compare different qualifications and identify where and how they could obtain a higher level of qualification – and a better salary.

Workforce development

- 8. All the countries offer some types of professional development opportunities. But such opportunities do not always translate into participation in training. Information about training opportunities may not be well known or the benefits of participating may not be clearly articulated, especially among the low-qualified ECEC workers. Even when teachers or other workers are motivated, their director may be reluctant to send them to training, especially for getting a higher level of qualification. S/he may assume that the teacher would subsequently demand a pay rise or leave for a higher-paying job elsewhere.
- 9. The range and type of professional development opportunities (*e.g.* mandatory or voluntary training, short workshops or a full programme, *etc.*) varies from country to country and, in some cases, from region to region, and from centre to centre. However, continuous training and professional development is often disconnected from the curriculum for initial teacher education, and there is scope for a better alignment to ensure coherency in teaching strategies and pedagogies.

Table 1. Challenges and factors at play associated with workforce supply, qualifications and development

	Challenges	Factors at Play
Workforce Supply	 Shortages (especially in remote and disadvantaged areas) Low level of qualifications Homogeneity of the workforce, (dominantly female, young, native teachers and staff) High turnover rates (especially in the child care sector) 	 Low wages Lower social status and stigmatisation (feminisation) of the occupation Heavy workload and long working hours Lack of support, means, and opportunities to negotiate salaries² No systemic state support or regulation, especially in the care sector Lack of professional development opportunities and progressive career pathways for ECEC teachers and staff
Qualifications	 Emerging new profile or profession/ new qualifications Confusion about existing teaching qualifications Re-arranging qualifications (integration of care and education) 	 Lack of equivalent qualifications across ECEC and primary education Lack of mobility and pathways between the academic and vocational qualifications Confusion due to overlaps of qualifications
Workforce development	 Low take-up rate, especially those with lower qualifications Very little research to indicate effective training programmes (e.g. length, contents, arrangements for mandatory/voluntary, etc.) Lack of continuum of the curriculum for teacher education and continuous training 	 Insufficient access to training opportunities Lack of time to participate Rigid regulatory environment that does not support qualifications pathways and, therefore, as little incentive for unqualified staff to obtain lower-level qualifications Lack of information about, interest in, and motivation for upskilling Lack of understanding and management skills of centre directors in budgeting, organisational and human resources management

Possible policy responses/strategies

10. Policy responses and strategies to these challenges for the ECEC workforce can be usefully framed around the policy alignment of different government steering tools (Figure 1). These tools can be used in combination for more effective policy implementation.



Figure 1. Framing the Policy Alignment - Government Steering Tools

- 11. Setting out an explicit policy goal or strategy may be the first step for a government to consider. It can help communicate its commitment, vision and targets, and action plan to their stakeholders. **Australia** is developing a *National Early Years Workforce Strategy* to provide a long-term blueprint to improve recruitment and retention of a high quality workforce in ECEC, develop pathways that reward and support the best workers, and raise the level of qualifications.³
- 12. Having an explicit goal may also help the government to coordinate or prioritise the use of these tools. For example, to achieve a goal of "recruiting new teachers" most effectively, a government can use some of the tools in parallel such as allocating "funding" for student loans, changing "regulations" for better salaries and progressive career paths, renewing "qualifications" for easier job change, and organising attractive "continuous training".
- 13. The most commonly cited policy goals among the countries include:
 - recruiting qualified workforce
 - improving working conditions and retaining qualified workforce
 - raising the level of qualifications and upskilling the current workforce
- 14. There is relatively little evidence and research to suggest which policies will have the most impact on these goals. However, country practices can provide examples of the policy responses/strategies that are available and how governments are using these different steering tools effectively. Some are highlighted below and many others are provided in the Annex to this paper [EDU/EDPC(2009)19/ANN1]

To recruit qualified workforce

15. To recruit a more qualified workforce, governments need to make the profession more attractive for prospective students and job changers. Some governments also need to focus on those with underrepresented characteristics (gender, age, and ethnic background), where relevant, to improve diversity in the workforce. Governments can improve the attractiveness of the profession to candidates through

steering tools such as funding for students; awareness-raising and changing qualifications to give a higher status to the profession; and raising the level of qualifications. Some examples are the following:

Funding for students

- **Australia** funds ECEC diplomas to lessen the financial burden on the students. It also reduces student loans for ECEC teachers, targeting areas with severe shortages (*i.e.* indigenous communities, regional and remote areas, and areas of high disadvantages).
- Canada (British Columbia) provides a rebate on student loans for graduates of Early Childhood
 Education programmes for the first two years that they are working in a licensed child care
 facility
- New Zealand provides students grants and scholarships for hard-to-staff professions, including ECEC.

Awareness-raising and raising status of ECEC professionals

- **The United Kingdom (England)** seeks to stimulate demand by encouraging parents to seek centres with qualified staff; to attract career changers and new graduates to consider the profession as a career option and to encourage employers to have qualified staff.⁴
- **The Netherlands** uses recognition of non-formal and informal learning (RNFIL) on the basis of collective agreement with the professional body, and there is an established validation procedure.
- New Zealand assesses foreign qualifications and offers a diploma in ECEC if it is comparable to New Zealand's benchmark.

Revising teacher education to raise the level of qualifications

- **Belgium (Flanders)** aims to merge kindergarten teachers and primary teachers into a single career profile with the same set of required competences.

To improve working conditions and retain qualified workforce

- 16. Improving working conditions is important not only to retain qualified staff in the profession but also to encourage prospective new-comers to enter the profession. This requires a comprehensive approach to working conditions, including both financial (*e.g.* salary and compensation for overworking) and non-financial (*e.g.* holidays and career progression prospects) dimensions.
- 17. The tools which governments use vary from country to country due to the different approaches to wage-setting, culture of trade unions, qualification systems. They include supporting arrangements for wage-setting and other terms and conditions; modernising qualifications; offering support measures and monitoring and assessment. Some examples are the following:

Supporting arrangements for wage-setting and other terms and conditions

- Australia has adopted a new system "multi-employer bargaining stream for low paid jobs" to assist both employers and low-paid employees in sectors like child care to reach agreements to improve wages and working conditions.
- In **Belgium** (**Flanders**), the government has introduced additional holidays for qualified, experienced, older employees working in approved day care centres and aims to retain them as staff and to promote them as managers. The government is considering regulating the care sector and granting family day carers⁵ full employee status.
- In Japan, public kindergarten teachers can receive adjusted allowances for overtime working hours.

- In New Zealand, working conditions are negotiated between the teachers and their employers, except for kindergarten teachers where the Ministry of Education negotiates their terms and conditions on behalf of kindergarten associations.
- In Portugal and New Zealand, kindergarten teachers have been given pay parity with primary and secondary school teachers. New Zealand expects that it will flow through to other teachers in early education sector, and provides additional funding to cover the extra cost of employing qualified and registered teachers.

Modernising qualifications

- **Belgium (Flanders)** reports that the new Flemish qualification structure, calibrated to the European Qualification Framework, could promote multi-directional mobility such as from family day carer to kindergarten teacher (horizontal) and from staff to manager (vertical).
- In **Italy**, ECEC teachers can become school manager or technical manager.
- Norway allows ECEC teachers to become school managers, municipal administrators and further education educators for ECEC.

Offering adequate and needs-based teacher support

- In Belgium (Flanders), new kindergarten teachers are entitled to an induction programme with a
 mentor during the first year. In a large classroom, childcare workers can assist kindergarten
 teachers to reduce workload and provide a better staff/ child ratio.
- **Italy** requires a one year trial period for teachers with guidance and support from a tutor along with participation in an e-learning blended model training organised by the National Agency for the Development of School Autonomy.
- New Zealand funds support for the first two years of the induction and mentoring programme.
 During this period, graduates from an approved teacher education programme are expected to obtain a teacher practising certificate.

Monitor workforce supply and assess working conditions.

- **Chile** has launched "Work Environment Improvement Projects" to monitor working conditions of staff working in the ECEC sector and aims to implement a "Quality Care Assurance Model".
- In **New Zealand** registered teachers need to renew their registration for a teacher practising certificate (licensing). They must provide evidence of meeting the requirements for full registration during the appraisal process every three years.

To raise the level of qualifications and upskill the current workforce

- 18. Raising the level of qualifications of ECEC professions and upskilling the current workforce are of particular importance. It can be done through upgrading qualifications and organising continuous training. But setting up the structure or infrastructure in itself is not sufficient for the current staff, especially low-qualified, to actually obtain a higher qualification and take up professional development opportunities.
- 19. Governments have started to carefully study possible incentives that will give motivation both extrinsic (*e.g.* compensation for foregone earnings while obtaining a higher qualification and availability of flexible training) and intrinsic (*e.g.* a sense of engagement due to relevant contents of training and a feel of a need for such training). Steering tools can include the following: promoting flexible continuous training with support from employers; providing continuous training that is relevant to the needs of children and parents; providing financial support to employed workers for upskilling; integrating training and qualifications across different levels; and using recognition of non-formal and informal learning to validate existing competencies.

Promoting flexible continuous training with support from employers

- In Canada (Manitoba), continuous training is voluntary and largely self-funded. However, the boards of early childhood education and care centres may make this a job requirement. The Manitoba Child Care Association (professional association) recommends that all practitioners complete 24 hours of continuous training each year.⁷
- The United Kingdom (England) has been working on, through an awareness-raising campaign, convincing employers and practitioners of the need for, and the value of, high level qualifications.

Providing continuous training that is relevant to the needs of children and parents

- **Finland** and **Mexico** aim to cover a wide range of skills such as communication with parents, orientation of activities' contents and materials, and teaching strategies and upbringing practices with a child-centred focus (*e.g.* how children move, play, experience art, explore, etc.).
- Portugal and Sweden focus on language development, mathematics, experimental sciences, and child assessment of learning and well-being. Sweden mostly focuses on stimulating language development, following a recent evaluation of continuous training programmes.
- New Zealand focuses on the implementation of *Te Whariki*, the Early Childhood Curriculum and provides training to improve learning outcomes for all young children, especially those at risk. Teachers are expected to strengthen their teaching practices and the government also provides training to support the implementation of *Kei Tua o te Pae*, Assessment for Learning.⁸

Provide financial support to employed workers for upskilling

- Slovenia offers study grants to individuals "Study Help for Pedagogical Workers" each year
- Japan allocates ear-marked government funds to prefectures for training day care personnel
- In Sweden, employers are responsible for continuous education. However, the government has put a priority on staff's skills enhancement and allocated SEK 600 million on continuous training for preschool teachers and child carers. Staff can keep 80% of the salary during the study period, co-funded by the government and the employers.⁹

Integrate training and qualifications among teachers across different levels.

- In **Portugal**, pre-school and primary teachers follow the same programme in the first three years then specialise in either pre-school or primary for the fourth year. Teachers can study for a fifth year if they wish to obtain certification for both levels.
- Japan is encouraging ECEC staff to obtain both kindergarten and day care qualifications to promote co-operation between facilities. Most of the college credits for both qualifications are already aligned and around 80% of staff in ECEC facilities hold both qualifications.
- In **New Zealand**, common qualification requirements for childcare and kindergarten services were introduced. The Diploma of Teaching (ECE) is the benchmark qualification.

Using recognition of non-formal and informal learning to validate existing competencies

- In **Australia**, recognition of prior learning (PRL) is seen as a quick way to validate the experience of workers and draw them into the qualified workforce and is included in the draft National Early Years Workforce Strategy.
- Canada (Alberta) introduced the Life Experience Equivalency Process (LEEP) for child care
 professionals to be certified as a Child Development Worker without taking a college certificate
 program. LEEP requires completion of a challenge exam and observation of skills using the
 Caregiver Interaction Scale (CIS) assessment instrument.
- Poland takes prior learning or work experiences into account in issuing teachers' qualifications
 on the basis of the minimum requirements for promotion, *i.e.* from beginning teacher, contracted
 teacher, nominated teacher, and to certified teacher.

NOTES

- Eighteen countries responded: Australia, Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Canada (Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Ontario and Quebec), Chile, Finland, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom (England).
- 2 Many countries reported that the salaries for ECEC staff are in most cases higher than the minimum wage but lower than those for primary education teachers, except for Portugal and New Zealand among the respondents.
- The strategy is accompanied by funding of \$ 126.6 million over the next four years.
- 4 England also has a public relations (PR) campaign to raise the status and improve recruitment among underrepresented groups, i.e. men, black, minority ethnic groups and career changers.
- Family day carers receive salaries, a payment when the children do not come, a sickness payment and accrual of pension rights, but no holiday pay, termination payment, or unemployment benefit.
- This includes a vetting process, conducted by the Licensing & Vetting Service Centre, "to minimise the likelihood of the more vulnerable members of society (children, older people and those with special needs) being put at risk by individuals who may have displayed behaviour that could be detrimental to others' safety and wellbeing" http://www.police.govt.nz/service/vetting/guidelines.html.
- This can include reading articles, attending workshops (evenings, days, weekends) and participating in a mentoring programme.
- 8 Teachers are expected to develop effective assessment practices that meet the aspirations of the curriculum.
- Preschool teachers are expected to gain pedagogical and research skills and obtain an academic university credits; child carers, to focus on pedagogical skills and to obtain a secondary or high school level diploma