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DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION EDUCATION POLICY COMMITTEE

Network on Early Childhood Education and Care

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 4TH MEETING OF THE OECD NETWORK ON EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE: "ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF LEARNING AND WELLBEING"

The meeting was held at the OECD Headquarters in Paris on 30-31 October 2008

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 4TH MEETING OF THE OECD NETWORK ON EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE

1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

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1. Mr. Karl Le Quesne of New Zealand, Chair of the Network, opened the meeting. The Network **ADOPTED** the agenda.

2. ADOPTION OF THE SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 3rd MEETING

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2. The Network **APPROVED** the Summary Record of the 3rd Meeting.

3. OPENING REMARKS

3. The Director, Barbara Ischinger, welcomed participants and expressed, on behalf of the OECD, the appreciation to the Kind en Gezin for their contributions having hosted the Network until April 2008. She also thanked the Portuguese delegation for having organised the third meeting in Lisbon, Portugal. She highlighted the added value of the OECD's inter-disciplinary approach to the work on early childhood education and care (ECEC). She stressed that public policy should provide a sure start for all children to ensure their optimal life chances. She introduced four objectives of the meeting: 1) to review the policy priorities for future meetings; 2) to facilitate the exchange of country experience on 'Assessment and evaluation of learning and well-being'; 3) to discuss a project outline of a new project focusing on quality; and 4) to review the purpose and process of collecting information to update country profiles.

4. OPERATING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE NETWORK

4. The item was introduced by Ms. Deborah Roseveare, Head of the Education and Training Policy Division. She first briefly introduced the topics to be discussed in Session 9 so that delegates would have time for reflection prior to the discussion. She reviewed the operating arrangements of the Network. She suggested if the Network would like to enlarge the Bureau; explained the process of selecting the themes for future meetings of the Network; and presented the draft outline of a new project 'Encouraging Quality in ECEC'. She highlighted the fact that the project proposal was highly rated by the Education Policy Committee in its priority exercise for the Programme of Work and Budget 2009-10. She invited comments on these topics in Session 9.

5. COUNTRY PROFILES

5. The item was introduced by Miho Taguma, Policy Analyst, the Education and Training Policy Division. She gave an overview of the current status of the updated country profiles. Seven countries have so far submitted draft updates to the Kind en Gezin, in a work-in-progress format. Having reviewed opportunities and constraints of the current approach, she suggested some options to change the approach to proceed. She emphasised that any of the suggested approaches should not reinvent the wheel and

therefore build on the existing information from *Starting Strong* publications and the data available from other Directorates of the Organisation.

- 6. Ms. Maria del Carmen Huerta, Analyst, Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, followed the presentation and introduced the OECD Family Database. She focused on a section 'public policies for families and children' and presented three examples of indicators for international comparison: 1) public spending on families, 2) childcare enrolment rates (aged under 3), and 3) out-of-pocket childcare costs for a two-earner couples. She explained that the database will continue compiling and updating indicators, for which, she would cooperate with the Directorate for Education to share information.
- 7. Mr. Mark Unwin, Australia, took the discussant role. He emphasised the importance of the updating exercise but called for need to prioritise what kind of information should be collected. He welcomed the approach to collect information on a few specific themes. As examples of relevant themes from Australia, he listed: integration of care services and education; expanding access; and parental involvement. He also supported the idea of collecting information in a template style like *Starting Strong II* and the idea of linking the exercise with the new project. He furthered the discussion and suggested that the collected information should be shared through a web-based tool.
- 8. Ms. Kari Jacobsen, Norway, also took the discussant role and mentioned that the updated information has been useful such as for parliamentary inquiries. She stressed the need to carefully frame the country profile so that the information will capture the key policy issues from as many countries as possible. She also called for the need to streamline the information-collection process in order to collect responses from as many countries as possible. She empasised that countries should not be asked to provide data already existing within the Organisation such as from DELSA.
- 9. The Chair asked the Network if it is worth continuing the updating exercise. The majority of the delegates responded positively while expressing some reservations. Some strongly supported the idea of streamlining the data-collection process, avoiding any duplication of data collection by working with DELSA, and making sure that the available OECD data are consistent. Others underlined the need for qualitative information such as case studies to complement the Family Database, considering the caveas of available aggregated data. Several delegates stressed that the exercise should not be a 'simple update' of country profiles by those who participated in the thematic review but should invite others: this will help to provide a broader coverage and more peer learning opportunities. A few countries mentioned costs and financing as the most policy relevant information that they wish to know about other country practice by this type of exercise.
- 10. To proceed, the Network suggested to:
 - Provide a simple basic template for data collection;
 - Provide quick comparative results;
 - Focus on specific themes of high policy relevance;
 - Link to the new project on quality;
 - Work with the Family Database project of DELSA; and
 - Collect case studies.

6. INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME OF THE MEETING: ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF LEARNING AND WELL-BEING

11. Mr. Karl Le Quesne, Network Chair, introduced this item. He set the scene for policy discussion by posing a question 'why do we do this (assessment of well-being and learning in ECEC)?' He mapped different purposes for doing this such as to increase accountability of the ECEC system, to help government to make choices for its investment, to inform teaching practices, and to engage parents in their children's lives and learning, and to coordinate services across education, care, health and other social domains.

7. WELL-BEING AND FAMILY STRUCTURE

This item was introduced by Mr. Simon Chapple, Policy Analyst in the OECD's Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs. He gave a broader perspective to policies to enhance child well-being by introducing some findings from the upcoming publication. He presented a comparative overview of 6 policy-focused areas: 1) material well-being, 2) housing and environment, 3) educational well-being, 4) health and safety, 5) risky behaviours, and 6) quality of school life. The performance on these policy focused areas varies considerably across countries. Countries also show a great deal of differences in institutional arrangements of social spending, policy towards children under age three, and the impact of sole parenthood on well-being. He stressed the need of quality early child care for alleviating intergenerational inequality. He argued for the need to regular monitoring of child well-being at all stages, to conduct policy-related research, and to evaluate new additions to spending and other policy changes.

8. COUNTRY PRESENTATIONS AND WORK CARRIED OUT BY INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

- 13. This session provided opportunities for countries and other international organisations to share their experiences on assessment of child learning and well-being. Mr. Masatoshi Suzuki (Japan) briefed the Network on recent Japanese ECEC policy, which focuses on the integrating education and care, reduction of household expenditure, and revision of national curriculum standards.
- 14. Ms. Luisa Ucha (Portugal) gave a brief presentation of national curriculum evaluation and teacher evaluation. Teachers evaluate child learning and well-being and, therefore, she presented some case studies. She presented some implications from the results. For instance, observation and portfolio are most frequently used evaluation tools but teachers are in need for more methods and tools.
- 15. Mr. Karl Le Quesne (New Zealand) set out the policy goals, contexts and measures taken in New Zealand. There is no national policy on assessment in ECEC; however, New Zealand has well-established formative assessment in ECEC such as portfolio documentation of children's learning stories and literacy progression. Although evaluating individual children is a costly exercise, he argued that reconciling both child-focused and system-focused evaluation of learning is possible in theory in the New Zealand context, building on already established formative assessment practices and existing schooling information systems such as National Education Monitoring Project.
- 16. Ms. Kari Jacobsen (Norway) explained that there is no tradition of evaluation of individual children in Norway except for children with special needs. She highlighted the key feature of Norwegian approach being the responsibilities of local authorities and the unified system, *i.e.* social welfare and education. This context makes it difficult to assess child well-being at the national level despite the fact that some politicians are currently very keen on evaluating 'value for money' of investment in ECEC or education in general.

- 17. Mr. Mark Unwin (Australia) first explained Australian current policy thinking and new policy directions. ECEC is now a national priority to lift the productivity of the nation as a whole with better socio-economic and academic outcomes of all children, especially the disadvantaged. To ensure quality ECEC, Australia prepared National Quality Framework for Education and Care to provide clear quality standards for ECEC, to set up a quality rating system and to streamline licensing and accreditation arrangements. Australian Early Development Index has been established to provide baseline data about how children are faring in their development, to collect information on a community level (not individuals), and to allow policies to target communities in need for extra help to improve well-being and school readiness of children.
- 18. Mr. Gerardo Franco (Mexico) explained the Mexican context, which focuses on alleviating child poverty especially in rural and marginalised communities. He presented the plan for an impact evaluation with a sample of 300 communities, involving children, parents and practitioners. The evaluation will focus on competencies of children, parenting skills of parents, and results of evaluation of teachers (by self-evaluation and observation by parents and supervisors).
- 19. Mr. Christer Tofténius (Sweden) presented information on current practices and trends of the national evaluation. Is the preschool in transition? Sometimes the goals and working methods of the school has become the norm even when assessing the pre-school. The evaluation tells us that there has been a great focus on children's learning, development, achievement and skills, especially in the area of language development. Tests and standards are becoming more prevalent in practice and there is a greater emphasis on readiness for school. The government, being aware of a potential risk of suppressing diversity of children's learning and well-being wants to strengthen the educational emphasis and reinforce the pedagogical task for pre-school. There is also a strong movement trying to find new ways of assessing and valuing the quality of preschooling, where there is a space for deepened and expanded learning processes that can be opened up.
- 20. Mr. Frank Weldon (Canada) presented the 'Understanding the Early Years' initiative. It aims to provide funding to community-based, not-for-profit organisations to help them learn to generate and use local information on: the development of kindergarten; family circumstances and community factors that influence children's development; local programmes and services for young children and their families; and local socio-economic characteristics. To measure learning of children, the initiative has employed three direct assessments of children's cognitive abilities using the *Parent Interviews and Direct Assessments of Children Survey*. The major accomplishments include using the research results as a planning tool for new library and reading programmes; enhanced appreciation of the importance of the early years; enhanced community involvement in early childhood development activities; and better understanding of gaps in existing services. The next step is how to spread the initiative to other communities.
- 21. Ms. Mariette Chartier (Manitoba/Canada) introduced a provincial initiative, Measuring Early Childhood Development, in Manitoba. It aims to measure and monitor cross-sectoral early childhood development expenditures, activities, determinants, and outcomes across the life course. It is supported by a strong leadership by Manitoba's Premier and Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet to ensure an integrated information system on child development, the key data components include population-based measures; longitudinal representative studies; administrative data linkage; and programme evaluation.
- 22. Mr. Pablo Rupin (Chile) reported the Chilean situation by showing that public investments have been made to increase the places for ECEC. Childcare centres increased the number by about 4 times; kindergartens, about 1.5 times in the past 5 years. The policy has shifted to focus on quality assurance on the basis of ensuring equity; being effective in achieving educational objectives; and respecting diversity. Good results are believed to be delivered based on interactions of such factors as strong leadership, family

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and community involvement, good management of resources, for which evaluation is regarded as a must for improvement.

- Ms. Nada Pozar Matijasic (Slovenia) introduced self-evaluation practices carried out by teachers, headmasters and parents. While self-evaluation creates a sense of ownership, it requires good instruments such as defined indicators as well as crucial principles such as ethics, openness and fairness. In 2005, there was a change in legislation. It has introduced measures and procedures for assessment and assurance of quality in preschool centres and schools at the national level proposed by the National Council for quality and evaluation and decided by the minister. Recent policy actions include that the National School for Leadership in Education is developing logistics and will prepare guidelines for the use of instruments for defining quality.
- 24. Ms. Kari Jacobsen (Norway) explained that there is no tradition of direct assessment of learning in ECEC in the country, except for special needs students. However, there is a growing interest and different professional groups are making evaluation tools. Tools are seen helpful only when they come with feedback aiming at improvement. At the preschool level, parental cooperation is essential as documentation on the child at home is the source for improving education and care and other services. A planned white paper on the content and quality in ECEC will feature evaluation as one of the key factors.
- Ms. Yoshie Kaga (UNESCO) and Ms. Nora Milotay (European Commission) presented what other international organisations are doing/have done in the area of ECEC. Ms. Kaga introduced the *Education for All Global Monitoring Report*. The goals of the 'Education for All' for ECEC focuses on expanding and improving comprehensive ECEC, especially for the disadvantaged. The report has collected narrative description of progress in ECEC with some statistical information such as teaching staff and financing ECEC. Ms. Milotay shared with the participants the key messages of the EU Symposium on ECEC. The main concerns were the lack of comparable EU level data both quantitative and qualitative especially concerning complex provision and access due to different financing and targeting arrangements and without an agreed definition on quality.
- Delegates confirmed the importance for countries to learn from each other, but some delegates called for caution concerning the comparability of situations across countries; a variety of policy objectives and different tools were observed. Several delegates called for the importance of articulating policy goals, which will help define the focus of assessment such as physical well-being (e.g. health) or a specific subject (e.g. language development and numeracy). Some delegates had some concern about negative consequences of assessment at an early stage while others argued for positive consequences when assessment is carried out with a clear intention agreed by the stakeholders and when it is used wisely in a formative way not inviting a 'league table'. The importance was emphasised to make a distinction between what is measurable and what is accountable. It was found important to re-think that improving measures in this area can be done in the expense of other policy goals. As a practical point, it was discussed how best to deal with the idea of resistance to measurement and some countries shared experience of 'voluntary-basis', which spread the practices due to peer pressure among different states/schools and 'bandwagon'.
- 27. The Chair concluded the discussion by presenting four key dimensions of evaluation: 1) horizontal, *i.e.* where assessment takes place (*e.g.* ECEC, social welfare, family support, etc); 2) vertical, *i.e.* when assessment takes place with a lifelong learning spectrum (*e.g.* pre-schooling, at the end of primary/secondary education, tertiary education, and adult learning); 3) instrumental, *i.e.* how the assessment is carried out (*e.g.* the focus is academic or social and emotional, or the objective is summative or formative, etc.); 4) value of longitudinal, *i.e.* how the assessment practices are evaluated (*e.g.* measuring the impact, managing policy reform over time, managing unintended consequences, etc.)

9. A WAY FORWARD

- 28. The Chair summarised the responses of the priority exercise from 14 countries. The top five topics included: 1) Workforce supply, qualifications and development; 2) Integration of education and care; 3) Pedagogy for under three year olds; 4) Funding and financing; and 5) National curriculum policy and frameworks. In addition, 'linking research and policy' emerged as an important topic to include during the discussion.
- 29. The Network **AGREED** that the theme of the next meeting would be 'workforce supply, qualifications and development'.
- 30. Ms. Deborah Roseveare presented the draft outline of the new project and invited delegates to comment. The Network welcomed the draft outline with positive reactions and with a high level of interest. Several delegates found Phase I (defining quality) to be the most challenging. Many delegates expressed some concerns that the scope seems to cover too many aspects and that the project may not have enough resources to be completed within the suggested timeline. Several delegates suggested narrowing down the focus and using the *Starting Start II* report as a starting point. Several delegates expressed an interest in 'under age 3' while others stated that it is very difficult to collect data. Several delegates emphasised the importance of researching the contents and length of teacher training. Some delegates suggested that the analytical framework be structured to include: 1) quality of results; 2) quality of input; and 3) quality of outputs. The importance of reviewing literature, especially longitudinal studies, and collecting case studies was emphasised.
- 31. Ms. Deborah Roseveare thanked the delegates. She emphasised the important role that the Network is expected to play in shaping and implementing the new project. She explained that the project outline will be refined after being discussed at the Education Policy Committee and be presented at the next meeting of the Network. She emphasised that the new project will build on the work already done within the Organisation such as the DELSA's Family Database, the *Starting Strong* publication, etc.
- 32. The Chair invited comments concerning the enlargement of the bureau. He asked if the Network would benefit from having a bureau with more regional representations and if Ms. Luisa Ucha Silva (Portugal), Mr. Frank Weldon (Canada), and Mr. Keisuke Otani (Japan) would be interested in supporting the bureau. Ms. Ucha Silva accepted her nomination. Mr. Weldon and Mr. Otani explained that they would need to report their nominations to their government to respond. Ms. Mugyeong Moon (Korea) expressed an interest.
- 33. The Network **AGREED** that the bureau would be enlarged and that the follow-up and further nominations be done through a written procedure.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 34. Belgium asked that it be recorded that the representative of Belgium (Flanders) had not been invited to make a presentation to the meeting. The Secretariat explained that the delegate in question had not been registered in the Events Management System until two days before the meeting and therefore the Secretariat was uncertain about her attendance.
- 35. The Chair presented the Chair's summary and announced that the next meeting will be on 'workforce supply, qualifications and development' and is scheduled in Paris on 11-12 May 2009.

Final list of participants for the 4th meeting of the Network on Early Childhood **Education and Care**

Assessment and Evaluation of Learning and Well-being

Liste finale des participants pour la 4ème réunion du Réseau sur l'accueil et l'éducation des jeunes enfants

Estimation et évaluation des acquis et du bien-être

30/10/2008 - 31/10/2008

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