



**DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION  
EDUCATION POLICY COMMITTEE**

**Network on Early Childhood Education and Care**

**LIST OF SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR THE NEW QUALITY PROJECT**

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## LIST OF SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR THE NEW QUALITY PROJECT

1. The purpose of this document is to facilitate brainstorming on the *most policy relevant* questions to be asked in the questionnaire for the new project "encouraging quality in ECEC" in Item 8. The overarching question of the new project is "How can countries put in place policies to encourage quality in ECEC?" Therefore, questions should focus on implementation and be able to elicit information about tools, materials, checklists and strategies that are being used in order to effectively implement the 7 policy orientations, selected as the focus of the project.

2. Delegates are invited to:

- Reflect upon the suggested questions and consider policy relevance of these questions;
- Comment on which are the most important; and/ or
- Suggest their own questions which they consider would best elicit the information from other countries on what kind of tools, materials and strategies they are using in order to put these policies in place.

3. This questionnaire is *not* designed for statistical analysis or for the development of comparable indicators across the OECD countries. Countries are at different stages of their policy developments and implementation with the selected policies, and therefore, the purpose is to elicit as many country experiences and examples as possible to identify what has been done/successful and what could be avoided. Therefore, all questions will be open-ended questions without standardised answers although that will make it simple to compile data. If countries would not be able to answer some of the questions due to a lack of their experience or no future plan in implementing the selected policies, they could skip these questions. To measure the effectiveness of the use of such tools, materials and strategies, available evaluations on implementation will be studied. Some questions concern case studies. At the 4<sup>th</sup> Network meeting, several countries stressed the importance of including case studies.

4. The network's exercise to update country profiles is intended to collect some key quantitative indicators and descriptive information, which will complement the new project. The template for the country profile will be discussed in item 9.

5. To check the validity and reliability of this qualitative instrument, the Secretariat will run a pilot questionnaire. Several countries are invited to participate in the pilot.

### **Governance, co-ordination and management**

#### ***1. Take a systemic and integrated approach to policy development and implementation.***

- In countries with an integrated system, do you have the evidence to support inter-ministerial cooperation as a tool to enhance quality and/or efficiency in delivering ECEC services (administration, delivery and access, pedagogy, etc.)? Please provide the evidence. In countries with a split system, do you have the evidence that separate service delivery would be beneficial for end-users and/or would be beneficial for policymakers? Please provide the evidence.

- Is there a national, integrated strategy to improve quality in ECEC services? If yes, please attach the relevant document. Has the strategy been translated into a concrete implementation plan? Are there specific implementation targets (numerical or descriptive) and timelines to improve quality in ECEC services?
- In either of the systems – integrated or split – what are the strategies to ensure systemic and integrated approach (e.g. setting out a national framework, drafting a memorandum of understanding between ministries, setting up an inter-ministerial committee, restructuring ministries, etc.)?
- In what form / at what levels do you ensure a systemic and integrated approach (e.g. integrated administration, unified curriculum, integrated access points, etc.)? Please list the order of the aspects being integrated in time sequencing.
- In countries with a quasi ECEC market, what tools have been used to express quality for parental choice and ensure quality of ECEC services?

## ***2. Provide autonomy, funding and support to early childhood services.***

- How are the responsibilities shared between the central government and local authorities (e.g. funding for ECEC staff, hiring/firing staff, funding for access/places, teacher education, in-service training and teacher support, curriculum and pedagogy, quality assurance and enhancement mechanism, inspectorate, etc.)?
- What strategies and tools are being used to promote coordination between central government and local authorities in policy development and implementation for ECEC? For example, are there any checklists developed by the central governments for local authorities such as for inspectorate, checklists for providers, etc.? Is there any support system for ECEC services such as advisory centres in national or local level? If yes, explain how such a system operates (costs, nature of support, etc.) Are there capacity-building or leadership training for local authorities so that they can find the best local solutions? If yes, please describe the contents of such training, arrangements (e.g. mandatory/voluntary, length, costs, etc.).
- Are there regional differences in setting the minimum standards (e.g. for space and staff qualifications)? If yes, please describe how they differ and what were the driving forces for setting different standards? What are the tools that the national government can use to ensure overall quality while having different standards across the country?
- In countries where more autonomy is given to ECEC institutions, what kinds of quality control devices are used to manage the variance of quality among ECEC services from the central government / local authorities?
- Is there specific training available to strengthen leadership in ECEC centres/institutions? If so, who are the providers and who pay for the training costs?
- What strategies (communication and administration) do you use to avoid any stigmatisation of the disadvantaged groups?
- Is there a centrally established knowledge base on effective ECEC practices?
- Please give one or two examples of education policy interventions that have had unintended impacts (positive or negative) on quality by providing more autonomy, funding and support to early childhood services. Please also describe how you follow up on the unintended impacts.

## **Financing**

### ***3. Provide substantial public investment in services and the infrastructure.***

- If there was an increase in public spending on early childhood education and care in recent years in your country, please specify the annual increase rate compared to the previous year and the

year of increase. Please provide the figure in local currency. Please also explain how the increased budget was spent/planned to be spent. Please also explain what policy thinking enabled the mobilisation of resources, and how it was made possible? Please explain what was instrumental in making a case for more public spending on ECEC. What strategies, research evidence, tools and materials were used to support the increase?

- In federal countries, does the national government earmark funding on ECEC to local governments? Is it further earmarked for achieving specific policy goals (e.g. expanding access, ensuring universal free access, increasing participation of special target groups for equity, quality pedagogical goals, etc.)? Please describe means or strategies to ensure that the ear-marked funding is spent well for the particular goal (e.g. targeted or universal voucher system, direct funding to create care places, subsidies to institutions/care centres, lowering the age of compulsory education, funding training places for ECEC professionals, funding for salaries for more ECEC professionals, etc.)
- Research shows that improved training and qualification levels raise the quality of pedagogy in ECEC services. But higher qualifications can be followed by increased wage demands, which would, in the end, demand for the increased costs of services. Therefore, governments often fear the funding consequences of raising staff qualifications. Starting Strong II reports that governments tend to ask: Is this the best way to spend available budget? A case was reported from California (2005) where severe service shortages existed and many moderate income families were able to access only low quality services. Under such conditions, budgets could be better spent on subsidising target families such as with low income or spent on creating care places instead of setting higher qualification levels and spending subsidies on creating training places or covering training costs. Does your country experience such a situation facing trade-offs with respect to how public expenditure should be spent? If yes, please describe what the issue was; how you addressed the issue; what the outcome of your approach was.
- Has ECEC being included in the economic stimulus package as a response to the recent economic crisis in your country? If yes, what was the rationale?

## **Research, evaluation, monitoring and data collection**

### ***4. Place systematic attention to monitoring and data collection.***

- In your country, are there any attempts to measure child outcomes? If yes, please describe the evaluation programme (national, regional, pilot, etc.) and what data are being collected as child outcomes. If yes, please describe:
  1. What child outcomes (e.g. school readiness – emerging literacy, numeracy, cooperation with other children, etc.) are measured by your instrument;
  2. Policy purposes (e.g. accountability, improvement, information, stakeholder engagement, etc.) and whether these purposes can and should be reconciled? If not, what purpose is most important?;
  3. What the policy and political context are that drive for measuring outcomes;
  4. What are the opportunities and risks of focusing on an individual child's experience - Early help or intervention vs. Labeling vs. Narrowing curriculum and pedagogy;
  5. What methodology you use for assessment (summative vs. formative);
  6. How much the administration/operation costs for the type of assessment budgeted;
  7. How you identify communities where a stronger focus on linking quality and measuring outcomes;
  8. How often you administer the assessment;
  9. What would be important for policy implementation;
  10. How you have used the information on measured outcomes in policy developments;

11. What countries have already learned from assessment and how that information was used (e.g. assigning value to outcomes for 'value for money' analysis, identifying communities for further investment in quality of ECE);
  12. How amenable are children's dispositions, competencies and wellbeing to being evaluated at a system level? What mechanisms do you use to monitor child outcomes?;
  13. Whether it has caught media attention to formulate the general public. What strategies were used to manage the media?
- In your country, are there any attempts to measure quality of input/process (e.g. qualifications of ECEC staff, administration of ECEC institutions/centres, etc.)? What methods are used? How much does it cost? What lessons were learnt? What mechanisms do you use to monitor qualifications of ECEC staff?
  - Is there any assessment of system level impacts such as through longitudinal data collection? What are the purposes (e.g. record each child's ECEC attendance, monitor later achievement, assess non-educational outcomes, etc.)? Please describe the purpose and scope of the longitudinal study, target samples, etc.? How much has it been budgeted? What is the implementation plan? Is it an important condition to already have electronic enrolment records for school children using a national student or population number? How has the results been used in policy development?
  - If your country earmark funding for specific ECEC purposes, is it systematically evaluated?
  - Do you systematically collect data on participation in ECEC services? What kinds of participation rates are being collected? What is the policy thinking behind the data collection? Are data available by age? Are data available by socio-economic or immigrant background? Or a proxy such as number of subsidised places? Are data available by intensity of participation (days per week, hours per day)?

## **ECEC staff**

### ***5. Improve the working conditions and professional education of ECEC staff.***

- What kinds of policies have been implemented to achieve the following goals? What kind of tools, materials and strategies were used to implement the policies? What have been the major challenges in the implementation? How have these challenges been addressed?
  1. Setting out a workforce-specific goal in the long term;
  2. Improving working conditions and retaining qualified staff;
  3. Arranging/rearranging qualifications;
  4. Recruiting an adequate and qualified workforce;
  5. Upskilling the workforce (giving training opportunities and incentives, setting national standards for career paths, etc.).
- What kind of support materials have been developed for ECEC staff (e.g. a checklist of questions for ECEC staff to measure child development (e.g. Australian EDI); a centrally established knowledge base on effective ECEC practices, etc.)?
- Successful policy implementation or policy failure may be the result of various factors – the policy designs itself and the conditions under which the policy is to be implemented, for example. Please give one or two examples of policy lessons where you needed to make an adjustment in an implementation plan or policy design in improving working conditions and professional education of ECEC staff. Are there trade unions for ECEC staff? If so, are they a part of teachers' unions? How active are the trade unions of ECEC? How do you cost in their role in the implementation process? Are there any lessons learned for successful implementation on ECEC staff policy?
- Do you set an optimal proportion of registered teachers? What evidence base do you use for setting the optimal proportion? Who pays for the training? What is involved in getting a teaching/care license or reviewing such a licence?

## **Curriculum and pedagogy**

### ***6. Develop broad guidelines and curricular standards with the stakeholders for all ECEC services.***

- Does your country have guidelines and/or curriculum for early childhood education and care by specific age groups, by regions, for different provision, etc.? Please map what is available in your country. Please also state the goals of ECEC expressed in the curriculum.
- How detailed are curricular standards/guidelines? Are they input- or outcome-oriented? What are the core components of the curricula/guidelines? Please send us the curricular/guidelines or direct us to the reference websites.
- To what extent does guidelines/curriculum include explicit reference to disadvantaged children or children whose mother tongue is different to the host country language?
- How have you developed the guidelines/curriculum? Please describe the steps toward the development of the guidelines/curriculum and materials, research, tools you used for the development. For example, is there a national platform in place to allow consultation of ECEC staff, pedagogical training providers and policy makers to develop guidelines and curricular standards? Is there a national pedagogical centre to advise on ECEC curricular standards? If there is an independent centre specifically for ECEC? Please also describe the contents/number of hours specified in the curriculum/guidelines, if any.
- Is transition from ECEC to primary education considered an important policy objective? If yes, how does curriculum and pedagogy play out in the transition? Does the same body develop curriculum both for ECEC and primary education? If not, what other tools are used to ensure cooperation between ECEC and primary education, besides curriculum? Has your country experienced a trade off between strengthening the link between ECEC and weakening the link between ECEC and care policies?

## ***Family and community engagement***

### ***7. Encourage family and community involvement in early childhood services.***

- Please share case studies/examples identified as "best practices" for engaging family and communities in ECEC services? Are these systematically shared among ECEC providers? What evidence can we find from your country on positive effects of engaging family and community on better child well-being and learning?
- What are the tools to ensure family and community engagement?