Professionalization of ECEC:

What makes a high quality ECE workforce?

Dr. Jan Peeters
Centre for Innovation in the Early Years
Ghent University
Literature review on *high quality ECE workforce* (CoRe, 2011; Lazzari, et al, 2013)

- Broad consensus among researchers, and international organisations (OECD, UNICEF, EU), that *quality of ECE* and ultimately the *outcomes for children* and families and *more specific for the disadvantaged*, depend on well-educated, experienced and competent staff.

- **Higher levels of initial preparation** are associated with
  - better quality as well as better outcomes for children (Fukkink & Lont, 2007; Sylva et al., 2004)
  - more stimulating, warm and supportive interactions with children (OECD, 2006)
Literature review *high quality ECE workforce* (CoRe, 2011; Lazzari, et al, 2013)

- **the content** of the training and the methodologies (OECD, 2006)
- **continuing professional development (CPD) and pedagogical guidance** (Fukkink, Lont, 2007; Urban et al., 2011; Žogla, 2008).
- **Few days of training will not change traditional practices and convictions** (Fukkink, Lint, 2007)
- **CPD sustained by a coherent pedagogical framework** that stimulates **reflectivity** (Lazzarri, et al. 2013)
Literature review *high quality ECE workforce* (CoRe, 2011; Lazzari, et al, 2013)

- facilitate learning experiences by nourishing **curiosity, engagement and well-being** (Jensen, 2011; Laevers, 2011).
- design and implement a balanced curriculum that nurtures children’s holistic development by providing a variety of resources for play, exploration, meaning-making and self-expression (Mantovani, 2007; Pramling & Carlsson, 2008),
- involve parents and local **communities** in decision-making processes on management, quality and curriculum (Rychen, Salganik, 2003; Peeters, Vandenbroeck, 2012).
ECE Professions and workforce preparation (ISCED 5 or higher) across European countries (Oberhuemer, et al., 2010)

- Early childhood professional (0 to 6) Latvia, Slovenia, Sweden, Norway,
- Pre-primary professional (3 to 6) Belgium, Cyprus, Malta
- Pre-primary and primary professional (2/4 to 12) France, Netherlands, Bulgaria, Romania
- Social pedagogy professional (from 0 to 99) Denmark, Luxemburg, Finland
- Professional for child care and parental support programs (France, Belgium, Fl) (0 to 3, out of school and parental support)
Workforce preparation for 0 to 3

- Tendency towards integration childcare in social pedagogy or education: higher level of qualification, better working conditions (UNESCO, 2010)
  - Until mid nineties: Integration in broader social welfare system: de social ‘pedagog’ for all ages
  - From end nineties: Integration in education: teacher (England, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, Norway, Latvia, Slovenia, Finland, Denmark)

- Split systems: evolution towards social pedagog for the youngest children (France, Belgium Fl, Luxemburg)
What is a high quality workforce in ECEC? (Peeters, 2008)

- Being able to reach prescribed standards
- Being able to construct from practice new ways of dealing with parents and children to attend complex demands in specific contexts
What makes continuing professional development effective?

• Support in daily practice by pedagogical coach
  (Peeters, Cameron, et al., in press, systematic review)

• The development of reflective competences
  (Peeters, 2008, CoRe, 2011)
A high quality workforce in ECEC must be able to reflect critically on practice and to construct new pedagogical approaches together with children and parents (Peeters, 2008; CoRe, 2011)
Invisible (low or unqualified) assistants up to 40/50% of the workforce (CoRe, 2011; Van Laere, Peeters, Vandenbroeck, 2012)

Important role towards parents and children especially for disadvantaged groups (bridge function)

Few qualification requirements
Limited access to qualifying in-service training
Focus on practical caring tasks may jeopardize holistic pedagogical approach
‘Assistants’ or auxiliary staff (Van Laere, Peeters, Vandebroeck, 2012)

• Practitioners who ‘assist’ the higher-qualified core practitioner is working directly with children and families
• up to 40-50% of workforce in some EU countries (e.g. Denmark, France, Sweden, Slovenia, Lithuania)
• No assistants in Italy and Croatia
• Core professionals (qualified bachelor) mostly from middle class - assistants mostly from lower SES
Lack of formal training requirements of assistants

• Only Belgium (3-6), the Netherlands (4-12), Slovenia, Sweden and France have specific training requirements
• Sweden: *barnskötare* completes a three-year upper secondary vocational training in childcare and leisure-time studies
• Slovenia: *Pomočnik vzgojitelja* completes a four-year upper secondary qualification
Professional development of assistants

• Limited access to in-service training
• Fewer opportunities to participate in team meetings, collaborative planning and pedagogical documentation
• Lower level of initial qualification, less chance of participating in professional development
Roles and tasks of assistants

• Caring role
  = practical help and addressing physical needs
  = sometimes responsible for individual well-being and emotional needs

• Learning role
  = addressing learning needs of individual children and children with special needs

"Assistants ensure that children learn to like school"

"She really cares"
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CoRe recommendations towards lower qualified assistants</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rethink professional development</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pedagogical mentoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learning from practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Focus on tackling inequities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Increase job mobility</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Credits for learning in practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No dead end jobs</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Include assistants in qualifying training</strong></td>
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<td>• Denmark, France, Slovenia</td>
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CoRe recommendations on high quality workforce

- Equal and reciprocal relation theory/practice
  - reflection on working with poor/migrant parents
  - development of new practices

- Build leadership capacity
  - Training of directors

- High quality workforce needs competent system
  - Policies that address entire ECEC system
  - Professionalisation is multi-layered
The competent ECEC system

(CoRe, 2011; Peeters, 2013)

- INDIVIDUAL TEACHER
- TEAM / INSTITUTION
- INTERAGENCY / TRAINING CENTRES / LOCAL GOVERNMENT
- NATIONAL MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
- INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS
- INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS
INDIVIDUAL TEACHER: Active actor in process of professionalisation

Initial training: bachelor

Professional literature

Reflecting on own practice

Engagement in continuous training (courses, study days)
TEAM / INSTITUTION: common pedagogical approach

- Team meetings
- Coaching by mentor
- Defining quality together with parents
- Developing learning community
Competences needed on the individual and team level when working with ethnic minority families, poor families and children at risk. (Peeters, Sharmahd, 2014)

- Openness to dialogue with parents, colleagues and children on the basis of reciprocity;
- An engagement and ability to work towards social change;
- The ability to reflect critically on their own pedagogical practice and that of the team and the institution;
- The ability to create new pedagogical knowledge and practice.
INTERAGENCY / TRAINING CENTERS / LOCAL GOVERNMENT: DIVERSIFIED PD POLICY

- Training and intervision of directors
- Collecting PD needs
- Start courses for new teams
- PD resource centres
- Exchange of interesting practice
- Peer groups about common themes
NATIONAL MINISTRY OF EDUCATION: COHERENT POLICY

- Quality standards on accessibility and equal opportunities
- Competence profiles
- Self evaluation guidelines
- Financial resources for mentoring and training
- Accreditation of centres that offer PD
- Accreditation of continuous professional development and mentoring
- Qualification requirements (bachelor)
INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS AND FOUNDATIONS:

- Support for equal rights approach
- Support for working around diversity and poverty
- Exchange of interesting practice
- Advocacy
- Innovative projects

INNOVATION
INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

- Legal and ethical framework: Convention rights of the child
- Financing innovative projects
- Offer support for governments to develop bylaws
- Technical assistance
- Focal point to share and develop
High quality workforce: challenges for many countries

- Financing: costs of workforce preparation and PD
- Lack of child free hours
- Lack of recognition for mentoring and earlier acquired competences
- Large parts of ECEC workforce is unqualified
- Gender: more men needed!
- Recurrent preconditions not met:
  - Staff/child ratios
  - Group size
  - Working conditions
  - Continuity of staff


DECET, ISSA Diversity and Social Inclusion: Exploring Competences for Professional practice in ECEC.

Thank you for your attention
Raas Van Gaverestraat 67A, 9000 Gent
Belgium/Belgique
+32 (0)9 232 47 35
+32 (0)9 232 47 50
info@vbjk.be
www.vbjk.be