## EDITORIAL
## EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION: INTERNATIONAL SCENARIO

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## INTRODUCTION

Learning of a child starts from mother's womb is an ancient Indian concept. In Mahabharata, Arjun narrated the story of penetrating Chakravyuha (Wheel like formation of soldiers)   to Subhadra  his wife. His son, Abhimanyu could learn it, while in his mother's womb. As mother slept, Abhimanyu could not listen to the technique of coming out. In scriptures, one finds mention of various pious activities to be performed by a pregnant lady so that the baby comes out of the womb with appropriate development-vital, emotional and mental and spiritual. It may be interesting to note that, in recent times, developed nations have started accepting ancient Indian concept of learning and present India  has to relearn from them. The Mother (2002, p. 9) said

> "Indeed, if we want this education to have its maximum result, it should begin even before birth; in this case it is the mother herself who proceeds with this education by means of a twofold action: first, upon herself for her own improvement, and secondly, upon the child whom she is forming physically.
>
> For it is certain that the nature of the child to be born depends very much upon the mother who forms it, upon her aspiration and will as well as upon the material surroundings in which she lives.
>
> To see that her thoughts are always beautiful and pure, her feelings always noble and fine, her material surroundings as harmonious as possible and full of a great simplicity—this is the part of education which should apply to the mother herself.
>
> And if she has in addition a conscious and definite will to form the child according to the highest ideal she can conceive, then the very best conditions will be realised so that the child can come into the

world with his utmost potentialities. How many difficult efforts and useless complications would be avoided in this way!"

Although such stress on education, conduct and life style of pregnant ladies found in literature concerning ancient Indian social system is  now rare in modern Indian literature, in 2010, it was reported in a document of Govt. of Scotland of United Kingdom, which stated that  "Babies start to learn in the womb, particularly in the last trimester. They are born able to recognise familiar sounds and they have already developed some taste preferences" Learning and Teaching Scotland (2010, p. 15). Thus, family plays a crucial role in  provision for appropriate atmosphere for development of the baby, while in mother's womb.

Early childhood care and education, although traditionally was the responsibility of families, has now become part of formal system of child development. As the size of the family started getting smaller, the informal manner in which early childhood education and care was being provided under the supervision of senior members of the family got diminished in quantity and quality.  Nuclear as well as educated families need early childhood care and education very badly, so that both the parents could go to work. Rich could arrange such care by engaging paid workers, which was not possible in case of poor. As researches have been progressively coming out with data about the important role played by early childhood care and education, nations have been giving more attention in making this facility available for poor. Early childhood care and education, according to UNESCO (2007, p. 3) "supports children's survival, growth, development and learning – including health, nutrition and hygiene, and cognitive, social, physical and emotional development – from birth to entry into primary school in formal, informal and non-formal settings. Early childhood care and education has two parts: 1. Care and child minding for 0 to 3 year olds so that their parents and guardians can be free for work, and 2. Education and socialisation for 3 year old onwards, till a child starts learning in a primary school. Early childhood care and education has a long history and has been going on in an unsystematic manner, especially for the rich. Since 1990, the concept "Learning begins at birth" incorporated in Jomtien Declaration for Education for All (UNESCO, 1990) set the movement to provide government initiated early childhood and care

programmes. Dakar Framework of Action (UNESCO 2000) listed ECCE as the first framework. The declaration stated that

> "Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children
>
> All young children must be nurtured in safe and caring environments that allow them to become healthy, alert and secure and be able to learn. The past decade has provided more evidence that good quality early childhood care and education, both in families and in more structured programmes, have a positive impact on the survival, growth, development and learning potential of children. Such programmes should be comprehensive, focusing on all of the child's needs and encompassing health, nutrition and hygiene as well as cognitive and psycho-social development. They should be provided in the child's mother tongue and help to identify and enrich the care and education of children with special needs. Partnerships between governments, NGOs, communities and families can help ensure the provision of good care and education for children, especially for those most disadvantaged, through activities centred on the child, focused on the family, based within the community and supported by national, multi-sectoral policies and adequate resources.
>
> Governments, through relevant ministries, have the primary responsibility of formulating early childhood care and education policies within the context of national EFA plans, mobilizing political and popular support, and promoting flexible, adaptable programmes for young children that are appropriate to their age and not mere downward extensions of formal school systems. The education of parents and other caregivers in better child care, building on traditional practices, and the systematic use of early childhood indicators, are important elements in achieving this goal."

Moscow Framework for Action and Cooperation : Harnessing the Wealth of Nations (UNESCO 2010) highlighting importance of ECCE stated that :

> "ECCE is part of the right to education and the main foundation for holistic human development. In addition, ECCE is instrumental in poverty eradication and a critical stage to lay the foundations for

sustainable development. ECCE is an investment in the wealth of nations. There is a strong knowledge base consisting of models, including at national level, of high-quality scalable provision; evidence that families and communities respond to high- quality initiatives and knowledge of how to build capacity. But we still face challenges."

UNESCO (2015, p. 47) stated importance of programme of early childhood care and education as follows:

"The foundations of all learning are laid during the earliest years, when the basic building blocks of life are good health and nutrition, safety and support for emotional development in a caring home environment, and early and continuing cognitive stimulation through positive play and early learning. It is a basic human right for children to receive the support they need for their development. Getting the foundations right carries huge future benefits: better learning in school and higher educational attainment, which result in major social and economic gains for society. In addition, the efficiency of entire education systems can be increased by improving children's readiness to learn, resulting in less repetition and dropout."

Wall, Litjens, and  Taguma (2015, p. 3) reported that "The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) analysis from 2014 shows that 15-year-old students who attended preschool for at least one year perform better on PISA tests than students who have not attended ECEC." According to Sayre, Devercelli, Neuman and  Wodon (2015, p. 55), "A strong evidence base has emerged that confirms the impact of reaching children during the early years."

## BENCHMARKS OF ECCE

UNICEF (2008, pp.13-14) listed 10 benchmarks of Early Childhood Education and Care.

"The 10 benchmarks fall under the broad headings of policy framework (1 and 2), access (3 and 4), quality (5, 6, 7 and 8), and supporting context (9 and 10). The benchmarks are:

**1.   A minimum entitlement to paid parental leave**

The minimum proposed standard is that, on the birth of a child, one parent be entitled to leave of at least a year (to include pre-natal leave) at 50 per cent of salary (subject to upper and lower limits). For parents who are unemployed or self-employed, the income entitlement should not be less than the minimum wage or the level of social assistance. At least two weeks parental leave should be specifically reserved for fathers.

2. **A national plan with priority for disadvantaged children**
   All countries going through the child care transition should have undertaken extensive research and evolved a coherent national strategy to ensure that the benefits of early childhood education and care are fully available, especially to disadvantaged children (see discussion below). This dimension of early childhood services cannot currently be assessed and compared in a satisfactory way. Rather than omit such a critical factor, benchmark 2 records, as a proxy measure, whether governments have at least drawn up a national plan for the organization and financing of early childhood services.

3. **A minimum level of child care provision for under threes**
   The minimum proposed is that subsidized and regulated child care services should be available for at least 25 per cent of children under the age of three.

4. **A minimum level of access for four-year-olds**
   The minimum proposed is that at least 80 per cent of four-year-olds participate in publicly subsidized and accredited early education services for a minimum of 15 hours per week.

5. **A minimum level of training for all staff**
   The minimum proposed is that at least 80 per cent of staff having significant contact with young children, including neighbourhood and home-based child carers, should have relevant training. As a minimum, all staff should complete an induction course. A move towards pay and working conditions in line with the wider teaching or social care professions should also be envisaged.

6. **A minimum proportion of staff with higher level education and training**
   The minimum proposed is that at least 50 per cent of staff in early education centres supported and accredited by governmental agencies should have a minimum of three years tertiary education

with a recognized qualification in early childhood studies or a related field.

7. **A minimum staff-to children ratio**

The minimum proposed is that the ratio of pre-school children (four-to-five year-olds) to trained staff (educators and assistants) should not be greater than 15 to 1, and that group size should not exceed 24.

8. **A minimum level of public funding**

The suggested minimum is that the level of public spending on early childhood education and care (for children aged 0 to 6 years) should not be less than 1 per cent of GDP. These eight proposed benchmarks are supplemented by two further indicators designed to acknowledge and reflect wider social and economic factors critical to the efficacy of early childhood services.

9. **A low level of child poverty**

Specifically, a child poverty rate of less than 10 per cent. The definition of child poverty is that used by the OECD – the percentage of children growing up in families in which income, adjusted for family size, is less than 50 per cent of median income.

10. **Universal outreach**

To reinforce one of the central tenets of this report – that early childhood services should also be available to the children of disadvantaged families – this last benchmark attempts to measure and compare demonstrated national commitment to that ideal. As no direct measure is currently possible, the suggested proxy measure is the extent to which basic child health services have been made available to the most marginalized and difficult-to-reach families.

Specifically, the benchmark of 'universal outreach' is considered to have been met if a country has fulfilled at least two of the following three requirements: a) the rate of infant mortality is less than 4 per 1,000 live births b) the proportion of babies born with low birth weight (below 2,500 grams) is less than 6 per cent and c) the immunization rate for 12 to 23 month-olds (averaged over measles, polio and DPT3 vaccination) is higher than 95 per cent.

**Critical issues**

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The 10 benchmarks have been drawn up with a core of critical questions in mind:
*At what age can out-of-home education and care begin to benefit children?
*If today's knowledge suggests that children under the age of one are best cared for by parents, what policies can best support today's parents in that task?
*What should be the underlying aims and priorities of early childhood services?
* How is quality in early childhood education and care to be defined and monitored?
*What systems can make available high quality services to all and ensure that disadvantaged and at-risk children are included?
*Is the wider social and economic context supportive?
Or are early childhood services being asked to row upstream against powerful currents of child poverty, persistent disadvantage, and family-unfriendly policies in the economy and workplace?"

According to Department for Education, UK (2014, p. 6), four guiding principles for practice in early years are:
1. Every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured;
2. Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships;
3. Children learn and develop well in enabling environments, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers; and
4. Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.

## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CURRICULUM
High quality ECCE programmes have a written curriculum framework that covers communication skills, artistic, cultural, emotional, mental, moral, personal, physical, psychic, social, spiritual and vital development of learners. In addition to providing assistance to personnel engaged in imparting ECCE in designing various activities, helps parents and guardians build appropriate home environment and support activities at home.  A number of studies have reported that foundation of language, numeracy, social skills and emotional control is laid before the age of four. Curriculum specifies child-initiated and

staff-initiated activities. Out of various content areas literacy is the most important area. Development of concepts of space, time, quantities and size takes place through study of mathematics. Skills of logical reasoning and representation, and problem solving take place through study of mathematics and science. Physical education help develop appropriate postures and habits. Art and music contribute to emotional and social development. Use of ICT also contributes to better learning of various subjects, in addition to developing skills of understanding abstract concepts and relationships. Curricular areas for early childhood education, according to Learning Metrics Task Force (2013, pp.9-10) are:

> "1. *Physical Well-being:* •Physical health and nutrition; •Health knowledge and practice; •Safety knowledge and practice; •Gross, fine, and perceptual motor.
>
> 2. *Social and Emotional:* •Self-regulation; •Emotional awareness; •Self-concept and self-efficacy; •Empathy; •Social relationships and behaviours; •Conflict resolution; •Moral values.
>
> 3. *Culture and the Arts:* •Creative arts; •Self- and community-identity; •Awareness of and respect for diversity.
>
> 4. *Literacy and Communication:* •Receptive language; •Expressive language;
> •Vocabulary; •Print awareness.
>
> 5. *Learning Approaches and Cognition:* •Curiosity and engagement; •Persistence and attention; •Autonomy and initiative; •Cooperation; •Creativity; •Reasoning and problem solving; •Early critical thinking skills; •Symbolic representation.
>
> 6. *Numeracy and Mathematics:* •Number sense and operations; •Spatial sense and geometry; •Patterns and classification; •Measurement and comparison.
>
> 7. *Science and Technology:* •Inquiry skills; •Awareness of the natural and physical world; •Technology awareness."

Department for Education, UK (2014, p. 8) mentioned following seven areas in which activities and experience are to be developed:

> 1. Communication and language development involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations.

2. Physical development involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement. Children must also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food.

3. Personal, social and emotional development involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities.

4. Literacy development involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children must be given access to a wide range of reading materials (books, poems, and other written materials) to ignite their interest.

5. Mathematics involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces, and measures.

6. Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment.

7. Expressive arts and design involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology.

Early Years Education Unit, Ireland (2006) *mentioned* following principles of Siolta: The National Curriculum Framework for Early Childhood Education of Ireland:

"*Early childhood is a significant and distinct time in life that must be nurtured, respected, valued and supported in its own right.
*The child's individuality, strengths, rights and needs are central in the provision of quality early childhood experiences.

*Parents are the primary educators of the child and have a pre-eminent role in promoting her/his well-being, learning and development.
*Responsive, sensitive and reciprocal relationships, which are consistent over time, are essential to the wellbeing, learning and development of the young child.
*Equality is an essential characteristic of quality early childhood care and education.
*Quality early childhood settings acknowledge and respect diversity and ensure that all children and families have their individual, personal, cultural and linguistic identity validated.
*The physical environment of the young child has a direct impact on her/his well-being, learning and development.
*The safety, welfare and well-being of all children must be protected and promoted in all early childhood environments.
*The role of the adult in providing quality early childhood experiences is fundamental.
*The provision of quality early childhood experiences requires cooperation, communication and mutual respect.
*Pedagogy in early childhood is expressed by curricula or programmes of activities which take a holistic approach to the development and learning of the child and reflect the inseparable nature of care and education.
*Play is central to the well-being, development and learning of the young child. "

Curriculum framework points out possibility of varieties of strategies for transacting curriculum including probable learner initiated activities and probable teacher initiated activities. Focus on specific aspects of curriculum varies from one setting to another. Wall, Litjens, and Taguma (2015, p. 23) stated that:

"The focus on certain topics in a curriculum differs among countries. Some emphasise learning goals and child outcomes (as is the case in many ECEC curricula in American states), while others are holistic and cover a broader range of topics. In Scandinavian countries, the child perspective is an important aspect of the curriculum, and ECEC staff are encouraged to plan practices and activities according to

children's perspective on experiences. In New Zealand, examples of pedagogical practices and experiences are included as part of the ECEC curriculum."

Many nations have developed minimum standards, which facilitate improvement in quality of delivery of ECCE programmes. As various factors such as parental qualification, parental involvement, quality of home environment, staff qualification and training, staff child ratios, infrastructure available in the school, play crucial role in quality of development taking place in a learner, nations develop standards at various levels and for various geographical regions and also for various population groups.

**Pedagogy**
According to Standards & Testing Agency, UK (2014, p. 4) three characteristics of effective learning: are: 1. Playing and exploring; 2. Active learning; and 3. Creating and thinking critically. There are wide variations in pedagogy used for ECCE programmes. Wall, Litjens, and Taguma (2015, p. 4) listed some counties and theories or theorists followed in them: reported Piaget and Vygotsky and others (England, Germany, France and New Zealand), The Montessori approach ( Germany and Japan), Developmentally Appropriate Practice or DAP (Japan), Reggio Emilia (Japan), Bronfenbrenner and Rogoff (New Zealand), Bruner (France), Freire, Robinson, Zimmer , Humboldt and Fröbel (Germany). In certain scriptures, it is stated that learning of a child also takes place before its birth, for which certain societies give stress on the spiritual life of the pregnant woman. Mohanty (2012, p. 531) mentioned about the epic Mahabharata narrating learning by Abhuimanyu, while in his mother's womb, the technique of a particular war strategy. Story telling is an important method for value education for children. In Sanskrit literature, the anthology of stories 'Mitralabha' tells how undesirable behaviours could be removed from the princes by making them listen to interesting stories and visualising consequences after specific episodes. Mathers, Eisenstadt, Sylva, Soukakou, and Ereky-Stevens (2014, p. 4) in their study of situation in UK, identified following four key dimensions of good quality pedagogy for all children under three:

1. Stable relationships and interactions with sensitive and responsive adults

2. A focus on play-based activities and routines which allow children to take the lead in their own learning

3. Support for communication and language

4. Opportunities to move and be physically active.

Wall, Litjens, and Taguma (2015, pp. 100-101) quoted information collected from two sources on key pedagogical approaches and practices found in selected countries:

## Table 1
## Key pedagogical approaches and practices in case-study countries

| Country | Key Pedagogical Approaches | Main Features | What evidence are pedagogical approaches and practices based on? | Which policies direct or affect pedagogical approaches? |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| UK | Child-centred | Adults provide a stimulating yet open ended environment for children to play within. | Research Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (REPEY - 2002) | The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), the Early Years National Curriculum |
| | Teacher-directed | Teacher initiated, programmed learning approach. | | |
| | Constructivist / Interactive Approach | Views learning as an active exchange between the child and environment that progresses in 'stages', with adults and peers providing important stimulus in learning. | | |
| | Play-based | Guided play opportunities are offered to children. | Early Years Foundation Stage Review (2011) | Staff qualifications |
| | Sustained shared thinking | Two individuals work together in an intellectual way to perform activities such as solving a problem or clarifying a concept - both parties must contribute to the thinking and develop and | | Monitoring and Quality Assurance: Ofsted |

| | | extend it. | | inspections |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Scaffolding | Process in which the child is seen as a learner, rather than passive entity, and the adult acts respectfully, allowing the child to enter 'flow' a period of high concentrated play | | |
| Japan | Guiding Child Care Theory | Children learn best when they feel 'free' and are supported by the teacher in a sympathetic way. | Inspiration drawn from Montessori, Reggio Emilia, and Developmentally Appropriate Practice. | Course of Study for Kindergartens/ Guidelines for Nursery Care at Day Nurseries Staff qualifications Monitoring and Quality Assurance: external and internal evaluations |
| | Theory of three activities in preschool (play based) | 1. Activities comprise of free play and guidance aimed at developing daily life skills. 2. Elements are extracted from child's play and re-constructed to be educational. 3. Directly teach linguistic, mathematical or artistic concepts and skills. | | |
| France | Didactic Pedagogy/ Direct Instruction | Classic method of learning with mainly teacher-initiated activities including repetition. | The theories and ideas of Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruner. Recent research studies on for example effective literacy, numeracy and phonology practices | National Curriculum Staff qualifications Monitoring and Quality Assurance: National and local inspections Alignment with formal schooling |
| | Constructivist / Interactive Approach | Views learning as an active exchange between the child and environment that progresses in 'stages', with adults and peers providing important stimulus in learning. Learning is organised so that it constantly builds on what has already been taught. | | |
| New Zealand | Te Whāriki | Adopts a specific socio-cultural perspective that | Te Ao Māori (the Maori culture) | Curriculum Staff qualifications |

| | | acknowledges the different cultural and social contexts in New Zealand. A social and interactive way of learning is highly important. | Pedagogical approaches and theories from Vygotsky, Bronfenbrenner, Rogoff. Priorities for Children's Learning in Early Childhood Services: Good Practice | Monitoring and Quality Assurance: National inspections and internal self-review |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Thus, there are many variations within a nation, for instance, UK.

## QUALITY MONITORING

Quality of educational programmes influences the degree of impact on the development of the learners. Conventionally stress is given on evaluation of structural quality that consists of assessment of class size, teacher student ratio, qualification and experience of teachers and helpers, physical infrastructure including books and other teaching learning aids, play materials and facilities, space for play, age appropriate curricula, social stimulation, health, nutrition and sanitation facilities, and parental involvement, facilities for learning music, dance, painting, etc.  Process quality is related to context and in particular the pedagogical interactions between the learner and the facilitator/teacher, interaction among learners and interaction of learners with the learning space and materials. Of course, structural quality plays crucial role in facilitating process quality, as certain processes require specific structures. OECD (2012, p. 9) listed five policy levers to be effective in encouraging quality in ECEC

1. Setting out quality goals and regulations.
2. Designing and implementing curriculum and standards.
3. Improving qualifications, training and working conditions.
4. Engaging families and communities.
5. Advancing data collection, research and monitoring.

Mathers, Eisenstadt, Sylva, Soukakou, and Ereky-Stevens (2014, p. 4) in their study of ECCE in UK, suggested following five 'key conditions' for quality:

1. Knowledgeable and capable practitioners, supported by strong leaders;

2. A stable staff team with a low turnover;

3. Effective staff deployment (e.g. favourable ratios, staff continuity);

4. Secure yet stimulating physical environments;

5. Engaged and involved families.

In order to have high quality ECCE, EU(2014, p. 17)  mentioned following criteria for structural quality

"*an entitlement to ECEC provision which should be universal rather than targeted;

*workforce qualifications (at least half the staff should hold a bachelors' level degree) and working conditions which ensure low turn-over rates (ideally the same status and pay as compulsory school teachers);

 *adult-child ratios and group sizes that are appropriate for the age and composition of the group of children;

*curriculum guidelines which combine a broad national framework with a range of local arrangements;

*quality monitoring systems that are implemented at the local/regional/central government level (and use appropriate tools);

*governance mechanisms which are part of a coherent system of integrated public policies and which ensure that adequate funding is provided for ECEC services especially in deprived areas."

Factors associated with process quality as reported by EU (2014, pp.17-18) are:

"*a pedagogical approach that combines education and care for nurturing the holistic development of children's potential;

*staff whose initial and continuing professional development opportunities support reflection and innovative practice; accompanied by a strong leadership and an ethos that is shared by all members of staff in an ECEC centre or setting;

*the way in which adults respond to the needs of young children, promote their emotional well-being and encourage them to engage actively in their learning;

*educational practices and learning strategies which respond to the needs of young children and sustain their curiosity rather than focusing on formalised learning which does not meet children's developmental potential;

*a curriculum that combines staff-initiated and child-initiated activities in order to sustain children's active engagement in the learning process.

This includes encouraging children to make their own decisions about their learning, organising group interactions, providing a variety of resources which respond to children's interests, and valuing play as a way in which children understand their world and develop their knowledge with adult support;

*a curriculum that is designed by children, parents, professionals and local communities whose voices, opinions and perspectives are valued for promoting diversity and furthering democratic values;

*centres' policies which are committed to reaching out and including children from different• social, ethnic or cultural backgrounds;

*a strong commitment to working with parents – including the involvement of parents in making decisions about the education and care of their children which can promote higher levels of parental engagement in their children's learning at home. Where there is cultural diversity, particular attention needs to be given to the development of parental partnerships in order to encourage and promote children's participation in ECEC;

*partnerships with parents and stakeholders which include the use of accurate and clear• documentation of children's activities, learning and socialising experiences;

*public policies that are designed in consultation with stakeholders and strive for the• recognition of ECEC as a right for all children."


Wall, Litjens, and  Taguma (2015, p. 6) reported  practice of monitoring the process quality by observing and assessing staff practices and interactions with children in England, New Zealand and Länder in Germany. "Process quality in kindergarten is the critical factor to support children's development

and thus needs to be included in standards and regulations, regularly monitored, and better researched with the use of reliable and valid instruments. (Engel, Steven Barnett, Anders & Taguma (2015, p.58). In a study for World Bank, Sayre, Devercelli, Neuman and  Wodon (2015, pp. 57-58) gave stress on monitoring quality in the following manner

> "Under political and budget pressures, policy makers may expand access to ECD services at the expense of quality. This may jeopardize the very benefits that policy makers hope children will gain through preschool and other ECD interventions. Impact evaluations suggest that the benefits from ECD interventions may be large, but if programs are not of high quality, the benefits may be negligible and the programs may even be detrimental. Furthermore, in many countries, a large proportion of ECD services are provided by the private sector; for these systems, well-defined and enforced monitoring and quality assurance systems are critical to ensure that standards for service delivery are met. The goal of monitoring and assuring quality refers to the data availability and systems to monitor ECD outcomes, the development of quality standards for ECD service delivery, and systems to monitor compliance with established standards."

Pupil teacher ratio is an important aspect of school quality. UNESCO (2015, pp. 382-383) gave following data on pupil teacher ratio position in various economic group countries and geographical regions of the world: World -21, Countries in Transition - 9, Developed Countries - 14, Developing Countries - 25, Arab States-20, Central and Eastern Europe -11, Central Asia -11; East Asia and the Pacific -22, Latin America and the Caribbean-18; North America and Western Europe-13; Sub-Saharan Africa-28; Countries with Low income-26; Countries with Middle income-24; and Countries with High income-13.

Quality of educators is one of the important factors of quality ECCE. Sun, Rao and Pearson (2015, p. 32) in their study on early childhood educators, prepared for UNESCO, summarised the global scenario in the following words:

> "Most teachers in rural, remote and / or disadvantaged areas still have no opportunities to receive professional training before they enter the workforce and those working with younger children also lack professional training. Further, in-service training opportunities for the

early childhood educators are rare. Clearly both in-service and pre-service training needs should be addressed. The contents in the training package should also be carefully selected, especially for intensive short-term training programmes. Government should therefore provide pre-service and in-service training opportunities for early childhood educators, especially for those working in the disadvantaged areas and those working with younger children."

## RESEARCH ON WHAT WORKS

Evangelou, Sylva, Kyriacou, Wild and Glenny (2009, pp. 4-5) in their review of related literature reported following key findings related to children's development

> • Children are born without a sense of self; they establish this through interactions with others (adults, siblings and peers) and with their culture.
> • Children thrive in warm, positive relationships characterised by contingent responses. The 'warmth' of relationships is not a novel concept but there is new research on the importance of adult's responding to the child's initiation, often called "contingent" responding.
> • Play is a prime context for development. Again, this is not new, but there are now studies on different kinds of play, especially the ways it can be enriched by guiding, planning and resourcing on the part of the staff in settings.
> • Conversation is another prime context for development of children's language, thinking but also their emotions. Again, the vital role for talk and conversations is not new. However, we now know more about the two broad types of conversation; one serves to confirm a child's understanding or feelings, while the other elaborates and extends that understanding.
> • Narrative enables children to create a meaningful personal and social world, but it also is a 'tool for thinking'. It is most effective when children are encouraged to form their own accounts, rather than passively accepting those of adults.
> • In enhancing children's thinking, it is more important to aim at depth and not breadth. Deep understanding is more important than superficial coverage.

• Early years curriculum needs to provide opportunities for problem solving to develop logico-mathematical thinking rather than only focusing on context specific elements.

• Children's phonological skills are important in learning to read but so is vocabulary. Phonological skills at age 5 are better predictors of reading at the age 7 than at the age 11. Vocabulary at age 5 is a better predictor of the more complex tasks of reading at age 11.

• Developmental theories such as those of Piaget (1983) have been linear, with children following similar pathways to adulthood. New theories assume that development proceeds in a web of multiple strands, with different children following different pathways.

• Findings from neuroscience that apply directly to the EYFS are still sparse; promising research is emerging on the infant's capacity to recognise similarity between their own actions and actions they see others do. This has been linked to 'mirror neurones' in the brain that are being investigated by developmental neuroscientists interested in the neural foundation for understanding actions and persons. Another area of neuroscientific enquiry has been the tendency of the child's brain to generate rules based on small datasets, rules that are resistant to change subsequently.

• Children's self-regulation requires the development of effortful control which facilitates the internalisation of social rules.

• Cultural niches and repertoires must be important considerations in shaping the context of children's learning.

• The concept of children's 'voice' is not new but has become an increasing focus of research."

Wall, Litjens, and Taguma (2015, p. 103) stated that

"In general, research revealed both positive and negative effects of particular pedagogical approaches. However, research evidence and studies considering the same approaches in the same context are extremely limited. On the other hand, specific pedagogical practices are found to enhance child development, including high-quality interactions involving sustained shared thinking methods, play-based learning, scaffolding, and a combination of staff- and child-initiated activities."

In a study for World Bank, Sayre, Devercelli, Neuman and Wodon (2015, p. 55) stated that "There are limited examples of "what works" at scale. While there is a growing knowledge base about successful pilot interventions, there is a need for pilots and impact evaluations to be carried out in the context of scalability and sustainability." Vargas-Barón (2015, p 7), in a study for UNESCO suggested following eight elements, which are to be addressed effectively within ECCE policy instruments in order to help ensure achieving equity, quality and accountability:.

> 1. Equity and child and parental rights;
>
> 2. Multisectoral coordination and local service integration, where possible;
>
> 3. A governance system that includes essential structures for policy development and implementation, such as a national ECCE council, an ECCE policy implementation institute or unit, and regional and municipal ECCE committees;
>
> 4. Standards and regulations for services, personnel and personnel performance;
>
> 5. Quality improvement and resource development, including improved curricula and methods, pre- and in-service training, certification and recertification systems, etc.
>
> 6. Systems of accountability, including supervisory systems, monitoring, evaluation and reporting linked to annual planning systems;
>
> 7. Adequate investment in systems that will take key programmes to scale on a phased basis; and
>
> 8. Policy advocacy and social communications to promote policy implementation

## ECCE AROUND THE WORLD

Shaefer (2015, p. 2) in a study conducted for UNESCO on the evolution of ECD services since 2000, reported:

"**\*a significant increase in the knowledge base of ECD** especially in the area of neuroscience (e.g., the damage to brain architecture and development from stress and neglect) but also in child health and nutrition, language development (e.g., the role of conversation in the home and of mother tongue

in the school), and the critical importance of caring, nurturing, and stimulating home environments

\***a substantial increase in the number of national ECD policies,** policy frameworks, and action plans, both sectoral and multi-sectoral

\***more extensive research demonstrating the positive impact of quality ECD programmes**, both short-term and longer-term, especially for disadvantaged populations

\***an increase and enrichment in the range of desired (and more often assessable) young child outcomes**, from basic health and nutrition status and school readiness to areas such as

early grade literacy and numeracy; non-cognitive outcomes such as self-regulation, gender sensitivity, resilience, and creativity; and even awareness of the range of environmental, social, economic, and cultural issues related to sustainable development

\***more systematic evaluations of different kinds of ECD programmes** leading to a better of idea of what works, under what circumstances, and to a much richer understanding about what "quality" ECD means. "

UNESCO (2014, pp. 332-334) gave following data on the number of countries covering specific age group, in the following table:

**Table 2**
**ECCE Provision around the World**

| Regions | No. of Countries in Each Age Group | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 3-4 yrs | 3-5 yrs | 3-6 yrs | 4-4 yrs | 4-5 yrs | 4-6 yrs | 5-5 yrs | 5-6 yrs | 6-6 yrs | Total |
| Arab States | - | 8 | - | - | 12 | - | 1 | - | - | 21 |
| Central and Eastern Europe | - | 10 | 11 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 21 |
| Central Asia | - | 4 | 5 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 9 |
| East Asia and the Pacific | 5 | 16 | - | 3 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 33 |
| Latin America and the Caribbean | 14 | 12 | - | 1 | 10 | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | 41 |
| North America and Western Europe | 3 | 16 | 3 | - | 3 | - | 1 | - | - | 26 |

| South and West Asia | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | 1 | | | 9 |
| Sub Saharan Africa | 1 | 25 | 3 | - | 4 | 8 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 46 |
| Total Countries | 25 | 94 | 23 | 5 | 34 | 11 | 6 | 6 | 2 | 206 |

Most preferred age group is 3-5 years provided by 95 countries. Other age groups and number of countries are: 4-5 years- 34 countries; 3-4 years- 25 countries; 3-6 years - 23 countries; 4-6 years- 11 countries; 4-4 years -7 countries, 5-6 years - 6 countries;   and 5-5 years - 6 countries and 6-6 years- 2 countries. Duration of the programme in case of majority of countries (105) is 3 years.  Duration is 2 years in 65 countries; 4 years in 23 countries and 1 year in 13 countries,

## PROGRESS AND PROBLEMS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION –INTERNATIONAL SCENARIO

Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2015 (UNESCO 2015, p.45) gave following scenario with respect to progress and problems in achieving early childhood care and education for all

> *"Highlights*
>
> *Despite a drop in child mortality rates of nearly 50%, 6.3 million children under the age of 5 died in 2013 from causes that are mostly preventable.
>
> *Progress in improving child nutrition has been considerable. Yet, globally, 1 in 4 children under 5 were stunted in 2013 - a sign of a chronic deficiency in essential nutrients.
>
> *In 2012, nearly 184 million children were enrolled in pre-primary education worldwide, an increase of nearly two-thirds since 1999.
>
> *Governments have committed to expand pre-primary education but private providers still account for more than 31% of all enrolled children in half of countries with data worldwide.
>
> *By 2014, 40 countries had instituted compulsory pre-primary education. In several Latin American countries, this led to a steady improvement in the enrolment of pre-primary aged children.

*The quality of childcare for very young children remains a serious issue. The knowledge, skills, status and pay for early childhood teachers must be addressed."

UNESCO (2015, p. 4) mentioned following data in respect of early childhood care and education.

**Table 3**
**Progress in Early Childhood Care and Education**

| World / Economic Groups / Geographical Regions | Under 5 Mortality rates 2013 (1000 Live Births) | Moderate or Severe Stunting (Child under age 5) | Total Enrolment 2012 (000) | Gross Enrolment ratio (GER) 2012 (%) | Gender Parity Index of GER 2012(F/M) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| World | 46 | 25 | 183604 | 54 | 1.0 |
| Low income          Countries | 76 | 37 | 12,381 | 19 | 0.97 |
| Lower middle income Countries | 59 | 35 | 70,748 | 50 | 1.01 |
| Upper middle income Countries | 20 | 8 | 63,569 | 69 | 1.01 |
| High income Countries | 6 | … | 36,907 | 86 | 0.99 |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 93 | 18 | 14,114 | 20 | 1.00 |
| Arab States | 34 | 20 | 4,309 | 26 | 0.98 |
| Central Asia | 35 | 16 | 1,886 | 33 | 1.00 |
| East Asia and the Pacific | 18 | 11 | 53,344 | 68 | 0.90 |
| South and West Asia | 55 | 34 | 53,517 | 55 | 1.02 |
| Latin America and the Caribbean | 18 | 11 | 21,396 | 74 | 1.00 |
| North America and Western Europe | 5 | 3 | 22,866 | 89 | 0.98 |
| Central and Eastern Europe | 12 | 8 | 12,172 | 74 | 0.98 |

Note: Gender parity is reached when the gender parity index is between 0.97 and 1.03.

Data from above table indicate that North America and Western Europe had the highest GER of 89 and Sub-Saharan Africa had the lowest GER of 20. Under 5 Mortality rates 2013  (1000 Live Births) varied between 5 in case of North America and Western Europe and 93 in case of Sub-Saharan Africa. Data on Moderate or Severe Stunting (Child under age 5) varied between 3 in case of North America and Western Europe and 20 in case of Arab States. There was no gap in case of gender parity among regions. Data on pre-primary school participation as reported in UNICEF (2014, p. 59) are as follows:

**Table 4**
**Pre-Primary School Participation in 2008-12: Gross Enrolment Ratio (%)**

| Countries and Areas | Male | Female | Countries and Areas | Male | Female |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 18 | 18 | East Asia and the Pacific | 60 | 61 |
| Eastern and Southern Africa | 22 | 22 | Latin America and the Caribbean | 73 | 73 |
| West and Central Africa | 14 | 14 | CEE/CIS | 59 | 58 |
| Middle East and North Africa | 26 | 24 | Least Developed Countries | 15 | 15 |
| South Asia | 49 | 50 | World | 50 | 50 |

Above data indicate same gross enrolment ratio of 50% in case of both male and female children of the world. However, there was variation in region wise gross enrolment ratio of male and female children and it varied between 14 and 73.   Percentages of participation of 4-year olds in pre-primary education in 2006 selected countries as reported in Haque, Nasrin, Yesmin and Biswas ( 2013, p. 35) were: 100% in France, Italy and Belgium; 94.8% in European Union and Japan and 58.2% in United States.

Following table lists countries having very poor performance, as reported in UNICEF (2014, pp. 54-58):

**Table 5**
**Gross Enrolment Ratio (%) 2008-2012**

| Country | Male | Female | Country | Male | Female |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yemen | 1 | 1 | Syrian Arab Republic | 11 | 11 |
| Chad | 2 | 2 | Togo | 11 | 11 |
| Burkina Faso | 3 | 3 | Congo | 13 | 13 |
| Mali | 3 | 3 | Senegal | 13 | 15 |
| Bhutan | 5 | 6 | Nigeria | 14 | 14 |
| Central African Rep. | 6 | 6 | Uganda | 14 | 14 |
| Niger | 6 | 6 | Bosnia & Herzegovina | 18 | 17 |
| Burundi | 7 | 7 | Botswana | 19 | 19 |
| Sierra Leone | 7 | 7 | Benin | 20 | 20 |
| Madagascar | 9 | 9 | Kyrgyzstan | 21 | 21 |
| Tajikistan | 10 | 8 | Lao PDR | 23 | 24 |
| Myanmar | 10 | 10 | TYR Macedonia | 25 | 26 |

In case of pupil teacher ratio, OECD (2013, p. 283) stated that "Globally in pre-primary education, there are 14 pupils for every teacher, on average across OECD countries. The pupil-teacher ratio, excluding teachers' aides, ranges from more than 20 pupils per teacher in Chile, China, France, Israel, Mexico and Turkey, to fewer than 10 in Estonia, Iceland, New Zealand, Slovenia and Sweden."

## Compulsory Attendance and Universal Coverage in Pre-Primary Education

Data in respect of   thirty countries with laws for compulsory pre-primary education as reported in UNESCO (2007, p. 130) are given below:

**Table 6**
**Countries with laws making Pre-Primary Education Compulsory**

| States | Year law was enacted | Age at which compulsory education begins | Number of years of compulsory pre-primary education | States | Year law was enacted | Age at which compulsory education begins | Number of years of compulsory pre-primary education |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arab States | | | | Peru 6 | 2004 | 3 | 3 |
| Sudan 1 | 1992 | 4 | | Uruguay | ----- | 5 | 1 |
| Central Asia | | | | Venezuela | 1999 | 4 | 2 |
| Kazakhstan 2 | 1999 | 5 | 1 | North American and Western Europe | | | |
| East Asia and the Pacific | | | | Cyprus | 2004 | 4 $^{2/3}$ | 1 |
| Brunei Darussalam | 1979 | 5 | 1 | Denmark | ----- | 5 | 1 |
| DPR Korea | ---- | 5 | 1 | Israel | 1949 | 3 | ---- |
| Macao, China 3 | 1995 | 5 | 1 | Luxembourg | 1963 | 4 | 2 |
| South   and   West Asia | | | | Central and Eastern Europe | | | |
| Iran,        Islamic Republic of | 2004 | 5 | 1 | Bulgaria | 2002/2003 | 6 | 1 |

| Sri Lanka | 1997 | 5 | | Hungary | 1993 | 5 | 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Latin America and the Caribbean | | | | Latvia | 2004 | 4 | 2 |
| Argentina | 1993 | 5 | 1 | TFYR Macedonia | 2005 | 6 | 1 |
| Colombia | 1994 | 5 | 1 | Poland | 2004 | 6 | 1 |
| Costa Rica 4 | 1997 | 4 or 5 | 1or 2 | Republic of Moldova | ----- | 5 | 1 |
| Dominican Republic | 1996 | 5 | 1 | Romania | ----- | 6 | 1 |
| El Salvador | 1990 | 4 | 3 | Serbia and Montenegro 7 | 2003 | $5^{1/2}$ | 1 |
| Mexico 5 | 2002 | 5 | 1 | Slovenia 8 | 2001 | 6 | 0 |
| Panama | 1995 | 4 | 1 | | | | |

Notes:

1. The measure is rarely enforced.
2. The law allows pre-school education to be provided by the family, pre-school organizations or schools.
3. The ECCE profile states that by 2006 the country planned to have free pre-school education begin at age 3 (instead of 5) and last for three years. There is no mention of changing the compulsory entrance age.
4. The ECCE profile states that all pre-school is mandatory. Further research shows that only the last year of pre-school is mandatory, as of age 5.
5. Compulsory pre-primary education was to be phased in for the following ages (as of 1 September): 5 (2004/05), 4 (2005/06) and 3 (2008/09).
6. The ECCE profile states that the law requires children to attend formal or non-formal initial education programmes from age 3.
7. Data are for Serbia only.
8. Pre-primary classes, which were obligatory one year before entering school, have been discontinued and the entrance age for compulsory primary school has been lowered by one year to age six.

**Sources:**

UNESCO-IBE (2006); *Cross-National Compilation of National ECCE Profiles*. UNESCO International Bureau of Education, Geneva.
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El Salvador and Panama: Elvir, A. P. and Asensio, C. L. 2006. Early childhood care and education in Central America: challenges and prospects. Background paper for *EFA Global Monitoring Report* 2007.
Romania: McLean, H. 2006. Reflections on changes in legislation and national policy frameworks: ECCE in Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Romania and Ukraine. Background paper for *EFA Global Monitoring Report* 2007. Out of these 36

countries, ten  are in Latin America and the Caribbean, nine in  Central and Eastern Europe, four in North American and Western Europe , three in  East Asia and the Pacific, two in South and West Asia and one each in Arab States and central Asia.  Interestingly, all these countries are small in size and population and are not either very rich or very much developed.

## ECCE IN EUROPEAN NATIONS

Early Childhood Care and Education in European nations have been reported by European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat (2014, pp. 11-18) as follows:

*32 million children are in the age range to use ECEC services in Europe (p.11)

*Only eight European countries guarantee every child an early place in ECEC – often directly following childcare leave (p.11)

*In most European countries, ECEC is split into two separate phases according to age (p.12)

*Participation in ECEC is low for the under-3s, but high during the year or two before starting primary education (p.13)

*International student achievement surveys (PISA and PIRLS) clearly show the benefits of ECEC attendance (p.13)

*Fees for ECEC vary considerably between European countries but around half provide education free of charge from age 3 (p.13)

*Local authorities often finance ECEC for younger children while they share costs with the central level for older children (p.14)

*Educational staff working with older children are usually required to have a Bachelor's degree as a minimum qualification (p.14)

*Heads of ECEC settings need relevant experience in most countries, but they receive specific management training in fewer countries (p.15)

*All countries set learning objectives related to children's progress and development (p.15)

*Most countries regularly assess children's progress and pay special attention to the transition between ECEC and primary education (p.16)

*Many countries recommend that settings provide support for parents and involve them in ECEC governance (p.16)

*Regulated home-based provision exists in most European countries, but the training required for childminders is often quite short (p.17)

*Disadvantaged children have lower ECEC participation rates, even though most countries offer means-tested financial support to parents (p.17)

*Support measures for disadvantaged children exist in most European countries; in most cases they focus on language development (p.18)

Bertram and Pascal (2014, pp.60-63) in their early years literature review came to following conclusions:

### System Developments

*Continued and increasing investment in early childhood programmes, particularly those aiming to enhance parenting and healthy living skills and provide children with early access to high quality early education;

More cohesion between the range of different early years services that children experience as they move from birth through infancy, to preschool and into schooling through the development of a common value base, vision, set of working principles and shared outcome measures which all providers and practitioners adhere to;

Early education and care programmes working in closer alliance and partnership with wider early intervention programmes, especially those concerned with supporting parenting skills and maternal and child health enhancement;

Greater and earlier engagement of health professionals and systems within the early years service delivery, to ensure information sharing and enhanced early intervention;

More engagement and clearer articulation of the key role of health visitors and the potential of the Health Visitor Implementation Programme within the development of universal and targeted support services for vulnerable young children and families;

The further development of locality systems which integrate all early years service providers systemically to ensure effective local coordination of multi-professional and multi-agency services to children and families;

The development of LA supported but system led improvement strategy, building on a network or alliance of high performing early years settings, particularly outstanding Nursery Schools, and offering

them capacity to extend their practice across the local authority to up skill the workforce and improve quality across all settings;

Greater emphasis and involvement of the responsibility of the school sector in the delivery of early years services, and in particular, a clear strategic and operational linkage between nursery and primary schools and Children's Centres;

The development of 'enhanced service' primary schools, which work closely with Children's Centres and other early years services on a locality basis to ensure continuity of support for the less advantaged;

Maintenance of policies beyond the short term to track impact and insist on rigorous evaluation of outcomes;

Rigorous implementation and monitoring of the new statutory framework for early years providers, including greater accountability and support to improve performance;

The development and implementation of a system wide, and carefully focused, framework of agreed early years outcomes for children and families, which provides cohesion and focus for the delivery of all early years services and an agreed strategy for measuring performance against these outcomes;

Tighter specifications and greater support around the nature of high quality early years provision and how to improve poorly performing settings;

Exploration of strategies to attract, recruit and positively reward high calibre, well qualified professionals to work in disadvantaged communities;

Improvement of training for the early years workforce, including up-skilling current employees, and supporting and deploying those with graduate qualifications, and especially qualified teachers, to operate effectively as leaders within the local system. In addition, the development and delivery of advanced training for local system leaders.

### Structural Developments

Investment in early years leadership at all levels, and across early education, social care and health services to champion and promote the importance of early years services and ensure the development and delivery of an integrated high quality system;

Favourable staff: child ratios should be encouraged, especially in health and education programmes which work with disadvantaged children;

Reductions in group/case load size should be encouraged, especially in programmes that work with disadvantaged children;

Development of well trained and qualified staff teams, including trained teachers, to work in integrated early years programmes, offering them access to ongoing staff development opportunities;

Development of early learning (cognitive and executive functioning development) knowledge amongst all staff who work with young children and families, as well as knowledge and understanding of child development and an Improvement of the child development content of both initial and continuing professional development for all early years practitioners;

An active, play based pedagogic approach with young children in early education and care programmes which encompasses a blend of formal and informal teaching and learning experiences should be encouraged;

A focus in the early years curriculum on both cognitive and non-cognitive aspects of early learning and, importantly, give the child a sense of their own capacity to be a successful learner with the prioritisation and measurement of executive functioning (PSED) and language development in early years provision;

A stronger emphasis in all health, social care and education programmes to encourage parents to support and engage more actively in their children's learning.

*Process Developments*

Adoption of more sensitive, responsive and nurturing staff: child relationships;

Adoption of family focused relationships, with key workers that have consistency and deep knowledge of a family over time;

Clarity about children's right to be heard in all early years programme development and implementation, and the development of staff skills to listen more effectively to children's voices at all times;

Encouragement of 'sustained shared thinking' with the children which encourages dialogue, negotiation of meanings and co-construction of understandings;

Work towards a more equal balance of child and adult initiated actions and encourage the development of self management, self regulation and critical thinking in children's activities;

Development of better training on diversity in all early childhood settings and for all early years staff;

Encouragement of behaviour policies in which staff in health, social care and early education support children's behaviour management through reasoning and talk.

**Training of ECCE Work Force**

European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2015, pp. 2-3)    pointed out following policy pointers for continued professional development of ECCE workforce:

"The evidence points to critical factors in CPD intervention. n CPD is best embedded in a coherent pedagogical framework or curriculum that builds upon research and addresses local needs. n Practitioners should be actively involved in the process of improving educational practice within ECEC settings. n CPD needs to be focused on practitioners learning in practice, in dialogue with colleagues and parents, which in turn implies that a mentor or coach should be available during staff's non-contact hours. n CPD interventions also require changes in working conditions, especially the availability of non-contact time. Interventions based on research-based enquiry or action research can help staff reflect on their pedagogical practice and so improve it. Those based on documentation or action research can provide the structure to help focus more on children's actual needs. Meanwhile, practice-based research can contribute to raising the quality of ECEC services through the dissemination and exchange of good practice, which in turn might help increase the status of ECEC in the eyes of the public and policymakers. Intensive CPD programmes with a video feedback component proved to be effective for achieving short-term outcomes in fostering practitioners' competences in care-giving and language stimulation, and regarding outcomes for children there were significant gains in terms of language acquisition and cognitive development.

Long-term CPD initiatives accompanied by pedagogical guidance and coaching in reflection groups proved to be effective for enhancing and

sustaining the quality of ECEC services over long periods of time; evidence of impact on children's cognitive and social outcomes was also found. Different combinations of CPD delivery modes can be seen not in opposition but rather as complementary, serving different goals in different contexts. Research on working conditions in Europe is mostly carried out within research designs that – albeit rigorous – might not necessary comply with the highest standards of systematic reviews: this is a concern that could be brought to the attention of policymakers and researchers when conducting future systematic reviews. The further elaboration of systematic review procedures that address challenges and the feasibility of reviewing literature in multiple languages might be considered: the richness of research and pedagogical traditions displayed across European Member States definitely calls for increased attention to studies published in languages other than English."

European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2015, p. 90) reporting conclusion of  the reviews of research evidence from all 28 EU Member States to identify how the training and development of ECEC workers can be tailored to improve the quality of the services available for children below primary-school age in EU Member States, stated that:

"Among other findings, it concludes that interventions in professional development that are integrated into existing practice – with a focus on reflection – can result in more effective practice and curricula. A video feedback component has been found effective in fostering practitioners' competences in care-giving and language stimulation; in addition, there is some evidence that higher staff–child ratios and smaller class sizes have positive effects on the quality of practitioners' practices and on staff–child interaction."

Siraj and Kingston (2015, p. .17) in their independent review of the Scottish early learning and childcare (ELC) workforce and out of school care (OSC) workforce recommended to "Introduce an early years specific teacher training in universities at both initial (0-6, with specialisms in 0-3 and 3-6) and postgraduate levels which are resourced and supported on a par with primary school courses.

**CONCLUSION**

Fourteen years ago, Myers (2001, pp. 22-25) mentioned following problems for ECCE : 1.  Weak political will; 2. Weak policy and legal frameworks; 3. Lack of, or poor use of, financial resources; 4. Uniformity (lack of options); 5. Poor quality; 6. Lack of attention to particular populations; 7. Lack of co-ordination; and 8. Narrow conceptualisation. These problems are also valid today. Sayre,  Devercelli, Neuman,  and  Wodon (2015 ,p.60)   in their review of efforts of the World Bank to promote early childhood development suggested that nations  need to (i) prepare a multisectoral ECD diagnostic and strategy; (ii) implement widely through effective coordination mechanisms established; (iii) create synergies and cost savings among interventions; and finally (iv) monitor, evaluate, and scale up successful interventions. Year round provision may be considered for ECCE, especially for children living in disadvantaged areas and children from disadvantaged families. Private institutions may consider such a policy, of course parents need to pay extra for the purpose. Working hours of the ECCE centres may be from morning to evening with provision for breakfast, lunch and afternoon refreshment.

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