



Curriculum and Quality Analysis and Impact Review
of European Early Childhood Education and Care

social-emotional development.

» CARE reviewed costs-benefits analyses from the USA and conducted a costs-benefits analysis itself of the Spanish preschool LOGSE reform, estimating a **return rate of 4 euros for every invested euro**. Moreover, the overall returns on investment are strongly dependent on the **effects obtained for disadvantaged children**.

What is needed to increase participation of disadvantaged groups?

» Analyses of large European data bases indicated that system characteristics, such as an **early starting age**, a high degree of **integration of functions and services**, **universal access** and **substantial public investment** contribute to higher perceived accessibility and, subsequently, to higher uptake.

» Focus group discussions in 7 countries with parents from immigrant and native working class groups revealed cultural barriers. Parents reported feelings of **being discriminated** and undervalued, a more general **lack of trust** in the official institutions of our society, and **disregard for the native languages** of the children in immigrant communities.

How do parents and educators think about cultural diversity?

» In some countries parents and teachers attached **high importance** to fostering of respect for **diversity** (Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal), but in other countries the support was **lower** (England, Finland, Netherlands).

» Parents with an **immigration background** attach higher value to cultural diversity and inclusion than other parents.

» **Educators** rate the importance of an inclusive diversity policy **overall higher** than **parents**, especially in countries such as England, Greece, Italy, Norway and Portugal.

» 42% of the interviewed parents find important that children in ECEC **learn another language than a country's main language**. Of parents with an **immigration background**, 66% find support in ECEC for dual language learning highly important.

» **Educators** and **policy makers** tend to find dual language learning less important.

European quality indicators

» By integrating all the results from the project, the CARE team proposed a framework of **European quality indicators**, which is available on the CARE website.

» The indicators are organized into the **macrolevel** of regions, states or countries, the **mesolevel** of centres and services, and the **microlevel** of the group.



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CARE

was a collaborative project funded by the European Union that addressed issues related to the quality, inclusiveness, and individual, social, and economic benefits of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in Europe.

Which competences and attitudes are important to foster in ECEC?

» The CARE team conducted **personal interviews** and a **internet-based survey** among 3400 parents and 3200 educators in 9 European countries. The team found that the ways in which parents and educators talk about developmental and learning goals, and also about quality and wellbeing in ECEC, is conceptually equivalent across countries. Apparently we have a **shared language** to address these topics.

» Analyses of a representative set of existing European curricula for ECEC showed that curriculum guidelines are well elaborated regarding **pre-academic 'hard' skills** (e.g., pre-literacy, pre-mathematical skills, language and communication skills) but less well articulated regarding **21st century 'soft' skills** (e.g., learning attitudes, creativity, citizenship).

» **Parents with immigrant or low-education** background value pre-academic skills more, but do not value soft skills less.

» Parents emphasize **development and learning goals**, such as openness to learning experiences, curiosity, creativity, self-consciousness, self-regulation and interpersonal social skills.

How is the concept of quality put into practice in the classroom?

» The CARE team conducted a study in Germany, Greece, Finland, Italy, Netherlands, Poland and Portugal, where practices from **32 classrooms** for 0-3 and 3-6-year-olds were observed.

» All practices were double-coded by an international team of observers using the **CLASS**. Educators from one country also evaluated practices observed in the other countries.

» The results showed **high agreement** and **high overall quality**. Despite differences (in physical circumstances, strategies of group management, etc.), the selected practices scored high on the **social-emotional process quality** dimensions and in the mid-level range on the **educational dimensions** of CLASS.

» There is a focus on dyadic models of educator-child relations, which need to be complemented by a **stronger focus on the group of children** as a community of learners.

» There were also **difficulties** in implementing a **balanced curriculum** and in **integrating play and learning**. A dissociated model was found: **explicit instruction of pre-academic 'hard' skills** takes place in the large group and **implicit promotion of 'soft' skills** in small group play time.

» This study led to the development of the **CARE video library** that gathers videos illustrating good practices in ECEC.

What are essential structural conditions to be fulfilled in order to reach a high level of process quality?

» CARE found **no clear overall main effects of single structural quality aspects** (e.g., group size, ratio, pre-service training level). However, subsequent analyses showed that **structural conditions work together**

to produce a certain level of process quality. For instance, a **big group size** was **compensated** by a **higher training level of the educator** or by **continuous professional development** in the ECEC centres.

» **Professional development** is a central factor for process quality. Three case studies conducted by the CARE team in Denmark, Poland and Italy show it can even compensate for unfavourable structural conditions.

» The most important aspect that parents said to weigh when considering the use of ECEC is their child's **wellbeing and development**.

» **Costs of ECEC** matter for parents when they consider the use of a particular form of ECEC, especially in **poorer countries** and for **lower-income families**. The importance of costs differs by country: overall high in England, Greece, Poland, Portugal, and low in Germany, Finland, Netherlands and Norway.

What is the impact of ECEC on individual and societal levels?

» An extensive review of the literature showed **overall positive effects of attending good to high quality ECEC** on all children, but largest effects on **children from low socioeconomic homes, immigrant families and language minorities**.

» The **evidence for the 0- to 3-year-olds is less consistent** and a very early start of centre-based ECEC with long hours per week may not be good for well-being and

