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

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Curriculum Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European ECEC

D3.1: Comparative review of professional development approaches

D3.1 Short summary

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Executive Summary

This report examines pre-service and in-service professional development strategies of early childhood education and care (ECEC) educators across 10 European countries from a variety of angles. Data were collected through a comprehensive questionnaire that posed open questions regarding the current resources, practices, policies, standards and innovative approaches undertaken in each country. Results are to directly contribute to the Curriculum Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European ECEC (CARE) project's workpackage 3 (WP3) objective of researching ECEC systems in terms of their significance and potential to increase learning and wellbeing for children.

The report addresses the following research questions:

1. Are countries' policies and professional development systems (pre-service and in-service) aimed at strengthening educational attainment and competence development among ECEC staff likely to lead to improved professional competences in meeting the range of demands and challenges of today's societies?
2. To what extent are professional development systems responding to increasing expectations that ECEC staff are able to identify and implement standards for high-quality services and meet children's needs, both in general and for the most vulnerable?
3. Which conditions (e.g. resources, policy and local authorities' prioritisation of high-level services) are provided for professional competence development (pre-service) and for sustainable workforce development (in-service), and to what extent are innovative approaches to ECEC systems under development in CARE's participating European countries?

A cross-country analysis sheds light on the differences, similarities and overall trends in European ECEC systems across six themes:

1. Pre-service professional development: ECEC educators' qualification requirements, standards and resources: A broad trend can be identified towards greater standardisation and academisation, with increasing demand for university level qualifications resulting in practical experience being replaced by theoretical knowledge. Reflective and competence-based approaches which link knowledge and practice appear best suited to preparing ECEC professionals for contemporary challenges.
2. Characteristics of in-service professional development for ECEC educators: While there are vast differences between countries in terms of resources and regulation of in-service training, two opposing approaches have emerged. The first places responsibility for continuing professional development with the individual (or e.g. professional organisations) in an entirely decentralised system with little or no regulation. The second places responsibility with national or local authorities which establish systems for continual professional development (with varying degrees of transparency and regulation) and provide some degree of support and resources. While there is an increased focus on pre-service qualifications of ECEC educators, in most countries, as well as within research, the potential benefits of a more systematic approach to in-service professional development, and of establishing strong links between pre-service and in-service professional development, remain largely unexplored and unexploited.
3. ECEC educators' role, responsibility and quality concepts: There are considerable differences with regard to the degree of standardisation in terms of defining the role and responsibility of ECEC educators and the concept of quality ECEC provision. In the majority of countries, however, these areas remain self-governed, either at the local authority level or the institutional level. It is important that future developments of pre-service and in-service professional development are closely linked to conceptions of the role, responsibility and quality of ECEC provision.

4. Policy developments and reforms: Reforms centre on the following issues: raising qualification standards of ECEC professionals; increasing the proportion of staff with professional qualifications; a greater integration of ECEC systems that split children aged zero to three and three to six; and improving access to in-service professional development. While the approaches taken vary considerably between countries, the overall picture is one of a greater focus on quality (regarded as closely linked to staff qualification levels) and a greater degree of standardisation.

5. Quality assurance regulation, monitoring and evaluation: Three approaches to quality assurance can be identified: a centralised system whereby all ECEC provision is evaluated according to standard criteria by an independent body; a decentralised system whereby ECEC providers evaluate themselves according to criteria determined by providers in cooperation with local authorities (although often within the framework of regional or national guidelines); and a stakeholder-based approach which supplements self-evaluation with, for example, parental evaluation. While a centralised approach works towards ensuring uniform quality standards, it may be seen as focused on control rather than development, disempowering ECEC professionals and stifling innovation. A system based on self-evaluation, meanwhile, ensures assessment is strongly linked to practice and acknowledges professional knowledge and expertise, but risks insularity, with no outside influences to help drive innovation. Finally, a stakeholder-based approach ensures direct accountability and immediate feedback from multiple perspectives; however, there is also a risk that professional knowledge may be devalued as providers are expected to respond to the 'market' in the form of stakeholder critique – quality ECEC provision may not always correspond with the demands of stakeholder groups.

6. Highlights of innovative approaches: One common approach to innovation within ECEC is establishing closer ties between policy, research and practice, both in terms of incorporating research findings within practice and ensuring that research is firmly rooted in practice (macro-level). Another promising approach involves developing the innovative competences of both the individual ECEC professional (linked to concepts such as the reflective practitioner and lifelong learning) (micro-level) and the ECEC organisation (approaches to organisational learning, communities of practice, etc.; meso-level). There is a need for greater understanding of how best to cultivate innovation within ECEC settings.

The analyses and findings led to three additional insights: the trend of increased (critical) reflection in practice; European ECEC systems' disparate strategies of addressing and responding to the most vulnerable children; and innovative approaches that build on professional development networks and communities of practice.

WP3's research questions and insights from the cross-case analyses led to following three recommendations:

New evidence-based longitudinal studies to more adequately address the strengthening of ECEC educators' competences with the aim of improving child outcomes;

More comprehensive and focused studies on who the 'vulnerable' are across Europe and working with ECEC educators to globally enhance process quality;

Policy to better support the creation and uses of innovative practices by fostering greater interaction between policymakers, research communities and ECEC educators and leaders.

Every country is in a process of rethinking, renewing and implementing professional development. They are looking for sustainable and *innovative practices*, trying to network within their systems and between countries, moving towards better monitoring and evaluation standards/processes/instruments. This common trend make the comparison and dialogue between countries particularly 'generative'

and useful. There is a strong discourse that confronts the trends of restricted resources and discriminatory provisions. However, a variety of innovative practices that draw on collaborations between stakeholders counter these trends and foster a new awareness across the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of European ECEC that can lead to the continuous enhancement of high-quality ECEC. Of additional importance is the question addressing to what extent European ECEC affects child outcomes. This question will be addressed in WP3's D3.2. Furthermore, developing and implementing innovative approaches in ECEC is of great interest and importance. In WP3's D3.3 such contributions are explored through case studies in three European countries.

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I. Introduction

In this section we outline the overall CARE project objectives as well as the specific aims of workpackage 3 (WP3), and how this report contributes to them. In particular, we will look at aspects of early childhood education and care (ECEC) pre-service and in-service professional development, resources and standards, the role of teachers/educators, policy development, quality concepts and assurance, and innovative approaches in ECEC that impact child outcomes and wellbeing for the most vulnerable as well as more generally. We furthermore examine some of the extant research (e.g. Eurydice, 2009, 2014; Eurofound, 2015; Oberhuemer et al., 2010; OECD, 2011, 2012a, 2012b) upon which this deliverable builds, placing Curriculum Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European ECEC (CARE) in the broader research context of European ECEC. In addition, CARE's research partners and their contributions, as well as the research and analytical processes used for this report, will be presented. Finally, we provide an overview of the concepts and definitions used throughout, and introduce the report structure and its sub-sections.

A. Overview

1. Project objective

Approaches to professional development

The overall CARE project objectives address the need to develop evidence in defining and assessing ECEC quality throughout Europe by examining aspects of ECEC that impact child outcomes and wellbeing. In support of these goals, WP3 explores systems of professional development within ECEC in terms of their potential to increase child wellbeing and learning in general, and wellbeing and learning among vulnerable and disadvantaged children in particular. This will be achieved by broadening knowledge regarding quality in ECEC by: 1) drawing on data from existing longitudinal studies regarding both ongoing and now concluded ECEC professional development programmes, as well as collecting general information on professional development systems and more detailed information regarding specific initiatives in CARE's participating European countries; and 2) analysing and comparing professional development systems and identifying innovative examples of 'best practice'.

The emphasis is on exploring new effective approaches to professional development aimed at enhancing education (pre-service professional development) and improving workforce training strategies (in-service professional development). The evidence will be used to consider how pre-service and in-service systems of professional development influence ECEC quality and child outcomes, so as to directly inform ECEC policy strategies, now and in the future.

In this first deliverable for WP3 (D3.1) the aim is to access current professional development systems and strategies for ECEC in European countries, focusing on continuities, discontinuities and contradictions in education and training, qualification levels, resources, employment, staffing, performance appraisals, organisation of work, license requirements, legislation and staff ratios, among other things. The overall aim is to uncover approaches to professional development throughout Europe and the impact of professional development on improving the quality of ECEC, following the thesis that this strengthens children's wellbeing and learning, both here and now, and in the longer term (Campbell et al., 2008).

Professional development in ECEC applies to a full range of activities that attempt to increase the knowledge base, skill sets and attitudinal perspectives of ECEC practitioners and professionals as they engage in child development and care, preschool education and kindergarten, as well as educational support services, home visits and parent education (Harvard Family Research Project, 2004, cited in Sheridan, Edwards, Marvin, & Knoche, 2009), and related activities such as parent support. Professional development programmes are composed of pre-service training at the vocational, bachelor or post-graduate levels, and ongoing professional development processes that take place in the ECEC field, such as in-service training or other lifelong learning initiatives.

In this D3.1 report, a 'Comparative Review of Professional Development Approaches', both pre-service and in-service training in 10 European countries are considered, and a cross-country analysis will shed light on differences, similarities and overall trends in the systems of professional development in Europe.

This study was carried out by first developing a questionnaire (see Appendix) according to which 10 partners of the interdisciplinary CARE project research team contributed by describing the systems of pre-service education and in-service professional development in their countries. Secondly, responses to the questionnaire were analysed in order to identify the approaches to professional development that affect the way educators in the different European countries implement early learning goals or

curricula. Responses also explored how different approaches enable professionals to handle current challenges within the ECEC systems, e.g. tackling social inequality through an early intervention in ECEC (e.g. Heckman, Stixrud, & Urzua, 2006), as well as other kinds of challenges which have emerged in recent years, such as strengthening children's wellbeing and learning by taking into account the UN Convention on Children's Rights (1989), implementing high-quality ECEC with a focus on structural and processual quality (Slot, Leseman, Verhagen, & Mulder, 2014), entering into new partnerships with parents – of all children and in particular the most vulnerable – and working in partnerships with universities, politicians and local authorities, etc. Lastly, findings were compared with results from a narrative literature review of the most important reports, and key studies on the effects of in-service professional development programmes on child development and learning (see II. Individual country analyses).

Careful study of different approaches sheds light on the importance of a well-educated workforce in the field of ECEC, of staff who develop competences necessary to implement the curriculum in their countries (see CARE's D2.1 "Overview of European ECEC Curricula and Curriculum Template"), and also of staff who are able to see beyond the pre-descriptions of curricula, early learning goals, guidelines and programmes. It is no longer sufficient that ECEC professionals acquire specific specialised knowledge and skills – they must also develop competences that allow them to apply knowledge and skills in a renewal of practice which is then constantly adapted to specific situations and specific children in day care centres and preschools.

An important aspect of professional development is the professional's role in implementing the culturally specific goals for ECEC in ways that coordinate the different contexts of child development, including the wider context of society, and that reflect the views of children as active learners (UN Convention, 1989), the values of families, school requirements, and the interests of society (European Commission, 2011). The implementation of early learning goals and curricula must also reflect the integration of process quality and structural quality. As we know from the literature, both processual quality (e.g. Howes et al., 2008) and structural quality (Burchinal, Cryer, Clifford, & Howes, 2002; Howes et al., 2008; Love et al., 2005) matter. A recent study showed, however, that the relationship between structural quality and processual quality in ECEC is not conclusive (Slot et al., 2014) and requires further empirical examination. The educator is thus responsible for the tasks of planning both structural and processual quality; e.g. how and in what material context and social setting children develop and learn, how quality issues should be approached, how to work with social inclusion in order to provide access to all children, and how to tackle disadvantage by enhancing the inclusiveness of ECEC systems. We also know that high-quality classroom interactions (responsive and warm relationships between teacher and child), as well as organisation and management (e.g. clear structures and predictability such as in CLASS, ECERS, ITERS), are related to greater engagement in learning activities for children (Hamre, Downer, Jamil, & Pianta, 2012; Rimm-Kaufman, Curby, Grimm, Nathanson, & Brock, 2009). These kinds of quality-enhancing procedures are influenced by ECEC practitioners and the systems of professional development, despite the fact that it is still unclear which types of professional development systems and related factors are associated with the different aspects of quality.

While there is some dispute as to necessary training levels, with many countries (see Moss, 2001) stipulating different requirements for practitioners depending on whether they work with children below or above a certain age, the international trend towards the professionalisation of ECEC educators has seen a growing consensus at the policy level – that ECEC educators should have a bachelor's degree or equivalent, including specific qualifications regarding ECEC, as we see in the analyses of the country reports (see III. Synthesis of individual country analyses, Theme 1: Pre-service professional development: ECEC educators' qualification requirements, standards and resources). This begs the question as to whether such qualifications have a positive impact on ECEC quality and, ultimately, on child outcomes. It also raises questions about the opportunities for establishing national systems combining pre-service and in-service development; moreover, whether and how professional

development opportunities in various countries are conceived as sustainable education and training extending beyond pre-service education – with content related to improving professionals' competences to meet the demands and challenges of contemporary societies, there is a need to develop connections between pre-service and in-service professional development .

Early et al. (2007) examined and reviewed seven major studies of ECEC, studying the relationship between educators' pre-service education levels and degree subjects, and classroom quality/child outcomes in order to understand the effectiveness of ECEC in relation to preschool teachers (of four-year-olds) in the U.S. They used comparable data from seven large-scale studies and analysed them using a common framework – a replicated secondary data analysis. An interesting finding was that, although Early et al. found some effects of teacher pre-service education, there was no clear correlation between teacher education levels and specialisations (i.e. whether or not teachers majored in early childhood education) on the one hand and quality/children's academic outcomes on the other hand. These findings, supported by later studies, indicate a pressing need to investigate such correlations today, in Europe, between professional development systems, pre-service qualifications and high-quality day care with results on child outcomes.

Overall, while there is no consensus on which kinds of professional development programmes improve quality and child outcomes, the best evidence would nevertheless seem to suggest that a broad range of in-service professional development activities and support for teacher-child interactions is required, instead of a narrow focus on pre-service academic qualifications (Early et al., 2007). Along these same lines, it is equally of value that we examine how present-day ECEC education and training in Europe reflects society's demands.

We already know from the OECD (2012a, 2012b), Eurydice (2009) and Oberhuemer, Schreyer and Neuman (2010) (expanded on in the next sub-section) that European countries show a large diversity in education and training approaches, depending on national systems, values and priorities. However, this report will shed light on new knowledge based on how reforms up until 2015 have contributed to new approaches to professional development systems, presented in II. Individual country analyses.

The analyses presented in the report are based on a thematic grouping of country-specific answers to a WP3 questionnaire (see Appendix), with three additional overall insights. The first of these insights concerns the extent to which professionals in European ECEC systems develop skills not just to apply knowledge, but also to adopt critical reflection in their practice. The second insight concerns ECEC professionals' competences to deal with vulnerable children and social inequality, and the third insight concerns communities of practice that shape ECEC professional development. Based on our analysis, the various country approaches and trends in ECEC professional development offer insights into present-day circumstances and challenges. Socio-economic and political influences underscore trends and offer cues and opportunities for the future of investments in ECEC professional development, in ways that impact ECEC systems and processes as a whole.

2. How the project builds on previous reports and research

Placing CARE in the broader research context

The CARE project enters a well-established field of ECEC research. Over the past decade, several reports have explored European ECEC systems and qualification standards, offering valuable characterisations of ECEC professionals (e.g. Eurydice, 2009, 2014; Eurofound, 2015; Oberhuemer et al., 2010; OECD, 2011, 2012a, 2012b). In this section, we briefly recap important empirical studies in order to position this report within existing research. The literature review is based on three sources: recent EU-reports, a narrative literature review on the impact of professional development on child

outcomes conducted for WP3, and the WP2 report 'Overview of European ECEC Curricula and Curriculum Template'.

Recent reports

Oberhuemer et al. (2010) conducted an exploration of 27 in-depth country profiles on staff qualifications, professional profiles, continuing professional development and various challenges facing the field. To explore the ECEC systems in each participating country, they took a broad view of each ECEC system, giving an overview of developments and traditional philosophies, as well as basic relevant information about countries. Compiling country reports, the authors examined features, such as descriptions of what specific activities actually take place in ECEC settings in different areas. Overall, the study indicated that high-quality ECEC is one element which, combined with progressive and generous parental leave policies and flexible employment, can act as a positive source of support for young children and their families.

In their analyses, Oberhuemer et al. (ibid.) noted the importance of whether countries have split ECEC systems, divided into two types of institutions (for younger and older children), or unified systems. Their study noted that split-systems often result in under-qualified and underpaid staff working with the youngest children (below the ages of three or four), while highly-qualified teachers are found working in kindergarten or primary school settings. This disparity is, in turn, reflected in prevalent attitudes in many European countries whereby ECEC caregivers receive less respect than school teachers. In unified systems, on the other hand, highly qualified staff are more evenly distributed throughout ECEC systems, with children aged zero through six. Oberhuemer et al. (ibid.) also identified an ECEC trend that is especially relevant to this report: the increasing use of transition classes between different ECEC levels, such as between pre-primary and primary school, or between day care and preschool. These transition programmes generally involve inter-professional cooperation between staff in different institutions, which ideally creates long-term professional relationships focused on how to support individual children as they change classes. The authors pointed out, however, that when such transition programmes are implemented too quickly or without proper professional support, the result can be higher staff:child ratios, impossible expectations for ECEC staff, and more rigid classroom environments for even the youngest children. The process, therefore, of creating working relationships between educators at different levels and institutions is of utmost importance as countries try to support the broad development and improve the school-readiness of all their young children, but especially in the case of vulnerable children and those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. The same importance may be placed on supportive professional networks and appropriate in-service training to guide staff toward creating relationships of this kind.

Based on Oberhuemer et al.'s research (ibid.), we see knowledge gaps at three levels; gaps which this report seeks to address. Firstly, the report contributes to addressing the importance of gathering more evidence on how professional development systems – both pre-service and in-service– tackle issues concerning transition and educators' abilities to create more integrated and inspiring learning and classroom environments for young children. Secondly, the findings highlight the importance of educators' competences to carefully implement new structural and processual changes into practice, and to work in communities of practice and collaborative teams within the ECEC field. Thirdly, there is still a wide gap in knowledge regarding the conceptualisation of innovative approaches and developing professional networks and in-service training programmes to support innovation. These three areas will be addressed in III. Synthesis of individual country analyses, including country-specific models and practices.

In the analyses presented in this report, we therefore not only want to highlight what has changed over the past few years in terms of ECEC practice, but also expand our insights to focus on emerging innovative approaches and consider how countries are addressing the growing numbers of socially and economically disadvantaged children enrolled in ECEC. The European Union has made it clear that

all children in Europe should benefit from high-quality ECEC, and one part of its Europe 2020 Strategy (European Commission, 2010) emphasises the role of ECEC as a foundation not only for children's later learning and development, but also for their broader opportunities in life, including employability and social integration into national cultures, also with respect to children with ethnic minority backgrounds. In short, well-educated young people are key to maintaining Europe's economic growth and high standard of living, and their development starts with the opportunities to grow and develop to the fullest extent. As such, the Oberhuemer et al. (2010) report addresses a need for renewal (defined here as innovate approaches in ongoing professional development) of the ECEC systems in Europe in order to improve the quality of children's learning and wellbeing development, and especially the learning, wellbeing and life opportunities of disadvantaged and vulnerable children. It is therefore a key aim of this report to identify innovative approaches as to how professional development systems – pre-service and in-service – can contribute to meeting such goals.

To achieve this, discussion has shifted to the whole child; a holistic vision that includes children's social, personal, cognitive and emotional development and wellbeing. Examinations of innovative approaches in ECEC are not directly addressed in the Oberhuemer et al. (ibid.) report, thus opening the opportunity for CARE's research. The appraisal of innovative approaches will also take into account the thesis that the quality of ECEC systems should be in a continuous process of improvement and renewal, thereby supporting all children's learning opportunities in a broad holistic way, including the most vulnerable and disadvantaged (Heckman et al., 2006).

Another key publication that frames this WP3 D3.1 is a two-part report on quality in ECEC, exploring measures being taken to support disadvantaged children and families in ECEC systems in European member states (Eurydice, 2009, 2014). Results from the first report (Eurydice, 2009) told the story that efforts were being made in all member countries; however, these efforts generally took on the form of larger, more generalised programmes with standardised approaches, rather than individual or locally targeted support. There were also numerous examples of language training programmes designed to improve the second-language abilities of children from immigrant backgrounds, but most programmes did not employ a holistic learning approach. Findings also showed that European governments were responding to the changing needs of the vulnerable by hiring additional ECEC support staff. In its report, Eurydice (2009) cited an emerging trend in ECEC research that suggested the importance of parental and family involvement in ECEC, beyond simply exchanging information or giving advice. This was fundamental to suggesting new practices in ECEC that could improve care and education for the vulnerable. In a follow-up report, Eurydice's 'Key data on early childhood education and care in Europe' (2014) examined and compared several logistical and administrative aspects of ECEC, including funding, fees, steering documents, participation statistics, staff qualification requirements and professional development. Statistics from 2012-2013 provided authoritative information on 30 European countries' ECEC systems and how they function as part of their respective societies. Relevant to this report, Eurydice noted the tendency of local authorities to take financial responsibility for the youngest ECEC levels while central governments become more involved at later levels. This situation is elaborated in greater detail in the present study, as demonstrated in II. Individual country analyses. Eurydice (2014) also noted the presence of learning objectives for children's development in ECEC; however, the study exposed the difficulties ECEC institutions in several countries face in lacking clear guidance from central authorities. Finally, Eurydice emphasised a need for increasing support for parents and families outside the social mainstream, whose children attend ECEC institutions.

In building upon these findings, WP3's D3.1 examines current innovative approaches undertaken in ECEC systems and provides concrete examples of how to tackle the changing needs in terms of resources, practices and demands, including addressing the needs of the most vulnerable – these can be found in II. Individual country analyses, under the Innovative approaches headers, as well as in this report's III. Synthesis of individual country analyses on Theme 6: Innovative approaches and IV. Additional insights, 2: ECEC and the vulnerable. We find that, despite the country-specific

variations in ECEC, there are strategies which can be employed beyond borders which have an enhancing effect on the systemic and processual aspects of ECEC quality.

Yet another key piece of research upon which this report builds is the OECD series 'Encouraging quality in early childhood education and care' (2011), which provided a thorough overview of many aspects of ECEC from a global perspective, taking into account more than 30 regions around the world. This research serves as a useful resource that provides succinct research backgrounds and minimum standards for the trends we explore in this report (such as the increasing academisation of ECEC pre-service training, and growing cooperation between communities and ECEC settings). There is particular attention to curriculum frameworks, which are categorised into input-based and outcome-based, and to curriculum content, including analysis regarding the split- versus integrated services of ECEC. The following year, in its Starting Strong III publication, the OECD (2012b) produced a 'Quality Toolbox', comprised of five research-supported policies that are drivers of quality improvement 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; and 5) advancing data collection, research and monitoring. In the present report we have asked CARE partners for their responses on some of the same features of quality, thus presenting the current state of affairs and also establishing a qualitative context for the descriptors in the OECD's report (2011). Our analyses examine ECEC quality concepts and educators' roles, policy developments and reforms, and innovative approaches. In addition, we have noted three further insights into ECEC staff development that invite further consideration with respect to reflective practice and its importance, practices in professional development that address ECEC for vulnerable children, and the role of communities of practice. As a whole, the cross-country analyses contribute with insights and build upon the OECD's Quality Toolbox (2012b) by addressing ECEC quality through various themes (see III. Synthesis of individual country analyses).

Eurofound's 2015 systematic review of ECEC professional development and working conditions synthesised existing studies on the efficacy of in-service training initiatives and their effects on quality, and on ECEC staff working conditions that are conducive to quality improvement. Research teams scrutinised 12 research databases, yielding 66 reports that were designed as either qualitative (47%), quantitative (38%) or mixed-methods (15%) research (ibid., pp. 22-23). Only two of these reports presented cross-national comparative studies in professional development and working conditions:

> Both comparative studies report findings on structural quality components that are related to working conditions: Cryer et al. (1999) involves the US along with three EU countries (Germany, Portugal, Spain), while Montie et al. (2006) illustrates the results of the IEA Pre-Primary project that was carried out in 10 countries (Finland, Greece, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Spain, Thailand and the US). In addition, nine (14%) studies were conducted in Portugal and in the UK respectively, eight (12%) in Ireland and Sweden, seven (11%) in Germany, six (9%) in Spain, three (5%) in the Netherlands and Belgium, two (3%) each in Croatia, Finland, Italy, Slovenia and while only one included study was carried out in Denmark, Greece and Poland (ibid., p. 23).

The report reached a number of conclusions relevant to our research, including the finding that, in general, in-service professional development initiatives were more likely to succeed if they were well integrated into individual centres' practices, and if they included tools for giving and receiving feedback (video feedback was cited as especially promising for training focused on children's cognitive development and language acquisition). In addition, the report found that long-term professional development programmes that included reflection groups, such as those run by specialised pedagogical trainers, were effective in a wide range of ECEC systems, including countries with low qualification standards for ECEC staff or low funding for ECEC. Effectiveness in this context referred not only to ECEC quality improvement (structural and processual, see "C. Concepts and definitions" below), but also to the ability to sustain improvements over a long period of time.

Equally important, however, are the research gaps uncovered by the systematic review (ibid., p. 41) that include the need for further research on the impact of short-term training, long-term interventions, feedback components of professional development, evaluation of long-term effects of professional development, and the effects of interventions that are standalone and not integrated into practices. In direct response, our report looks to illustrate the characteristics of pre-service and in-service professional development across 10 European countries so as to establish a 2015 baseline upon which we can gain insight into trends, which can lead to impact studies. Eurofound (ibid.) mined conditions for professional development programme effectiveness from the literature, yet these still require further evidence: 1) professional development programmes must be part of a broader, research-based pedagogical framework that is tailored to local communities; 2) ECEC practitioners must work actively to improve practices at each institution; and 3) professional development programmes must focus on learning in practice. Video feedback tools were again cited as a possible complement to reflection groups, and researchers here suggested the potential of combining the two approaches. As findings demonstrate in the current CARE report, there is evidence of these practices across Europe, yet empirical evidence of their effectiveness is still lacking. This report nevertheless fills in some of the knowledge gap on effectiveness by drawing on innovative approaches employed in CARE partner countries, firstly by country and then in our III. Synthesis of individual country analyses.

An additional key piece of research which WP3's D3.1 builds on is the CARE project's D2.1 report (2015), 'Overview of European ECEC Curricula and Curriculum Template', which also addresses the importance of professional development in order to implement curricula and high-quality provision of ECEC. The report highlights some challenges that strain ECEC systems and tells the story of ever changing societal needs and priorities, e.g. economic cuts, increases in group sizes, threats of poorer staff:child ratios, and reductions in funding for staff professional development. The analyses show that in some of CARE's participating countries there is still inadequate staff training and supervision, and one country mentions the challenge of developing a 'new concept' for preschool teachers' professionalism, while other countries report that there is a need for sustained professional development to support the workforce in developing the knowledge and skills to implement curricula efficiently.

Overall, the current report builds upon key research reports and findings regarding professional development in European ECEC systems while also attempting to fill in research gaps by providing cross-country knowledge and analyses, along with innovative approaches. More generally, WP3's D3.1 addresses these issues in an effort to better understand and prepare for high-quality ECEC provisions that can lead to improved outcomes for children, and in particular for the vulnerable and disadvantaged. In the following sub-section we will present a narrative review of literature that frames this report and further strengthens our rationale for including a central focus on innovative approaches to ECEC professional development.

A narrative review

A narrative review was conducted for WP3's D3.1. This review contributes to the literature on effective professional development by examining different approaches to professional development: the conceptual frameworks upon which programmes are based, which processes are emphasised, how the programmes are organised, and what evidence exists of their effects. A total of 57 studies were reviewed with preliminary results indicating gaps in the literature in terms of intervention studies concerning ECEC for children aged up to three years old, studies outside the US, and studies of programmes that develop professionals (see Appendix B for the review protocol). However, the review showed that the majority of studies are from the US, and that European research is sparse. The review also identified three common forms of in-service professional development programmes with different objectives: 1) specialised on-the-job in-service training; 2) coaching and mentoring; and, 3) communities of practice (Buysse & Wesley, 2005; Sheridan et al., 2009).

The first type of professional development – on-the-job in-service training – refers to a range of activities provided to educators in order to strengthen their qualifications to implement the curriculum. These programmes provide workshops, lectures, conferences, and manuals on specific topics. Research shows that this type of professional development is best suited to giving educators instruction and knowledge within a specific area. However, this kind of training, which is often only offered in the form of short courses, has limited effects (Sheridan et al., 2009).

The second type of professional development programmes, coaching, mentoring, and the like, e.g. via internet-based support systems, involves opportunities for the exchange of information between educators and coaches, mentors or consultants. This type of professional development provides feedback to educators based on their practice, and is often based on recorded observations and internet-based coaching. This form of professional development is personalised to the individual educator, and coaches typically observe educators as they work with children and provide feedback on their use of new skills (ibid.). More emphasis is given to interactive feedback processes between a course provider and participants; this has the benefit of being based on an educator's actual needs and therefore takes an individual approach. However, research results about the effects of this type of approach do not seem to show a clear trend. Nevertheless, individual educators seem to feel that they are taken seriously, and, when they receive feedback on their own learning processes, this enhances their competence development. Whether this professional development is sustainable, and whether it leads to more overall competence development within the entire ECEC sector is still not fully explored.

The third type of professional development is based on a theoretical approach to active learning (Ellström, 2010) and the idea that learning is an interactive process, as for instance developed in the theory of 'communities of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermot, & Snyder, 2002) and later in theoretical approaches to organisational learning (Gherardi, 2011). In this last form of professional development programmes, a group of educators exchanges ideas, reflection and support for each other in order to develop and improve their practices through knowledge-sharing and translating knowledge into practice, thereby qualifying practices. The learning community is the overall idea behind this third approach to professional development. However, even where research has identified these approaches to professional development, no evidence is provided on the effectiveness of these approaches in relation to one other.

The research reviewed by Zaslow, Tout, Halle, Whittaker, & Lavelle (2010) supports the assumption that when educators from the same classroom or school participate collectively in a professional development programme, this may enhance the effect of the programme. Joint participation can help support a professional culture and ensure the sustainability of new techniques and skills, including educators who work with different age groups or grades, whereby they can foster continuity in children's experiences. There is growing interest in the latter type of professional development, even though sufficient evidence of its effectiveness is still lacking. However, in theory, we assume that such ongoing learning processes running over a longer period are more likely to create renewal and change in the ECEC sector as a whole, and that these changes will be more permanent.

Overall, while there is no consensus on which kinds of professional development programmes improve quality and child outcomes the best, evidence nevertheless seems to suggest that a broad range of in-service professional development activities and support for teacher-child interactions are required instead of a narrow focus on pre-service academic qualifications (Early et al., 2007). As such, there is evidence suggesting that intervention programmes building on the third type of professional development, such as the programme suggested in this present study, will be effective. Furthermore, several studies have evidenced the effectiveness of ECEC on child development (Cunha & Heckman, 2007; Cunha, Heckman, Lochner, & Masterov, 2006; Heckman, 2006, 2008; see also Melhuish et al., in press). Additionally we have seen positive effects of the communities of practice approach to in-service professional development from two recent Danish programmes, the ASP-project (Jensen,

Holm, & Bremberg, 2013), and the VIDA approach to professional development (Jensen, 2014; Jensen, Jensen, & Würtz Rasmussen, 2015).

Research and other documents mentioned in this introduction, including the D2.1 CARE report (2015), 'Overview of European ECEC Curricula and Curriculum Template', found that the great challenge regarding systems of professional development is adequately improving the workforce in relation to new and evolving demands placed on ECEC. New policies (see III. Synthesis of individual country analyses) and evidence from the OECD (2012a) indicate that an early start with ECEC programmes is of crucial importance in order to provide for the development and learning conditions of all children. The OECD has highlighted the quality of ECEC provision as essential to ensuring positive outcomes and long-term benefits to society. As policymakers look to design early interventions in order to optimise educational spending, the OECD (ibid.) has identified five policy levers for effectively encouraging quality:

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

The current WP3 D3.1 report parallels the themes of these levers, and also captures some of the newest innovative approaches to professional development, which are defined as an aspect of social innovation. As Dawson and Daniel describe (2010, p. 16): 'Social innovation refers to the processes of collective idea generation, selection and implementation by people who participate collaboratively to meet social challenges'. The innovative approach doesn't necessarily cost more; however, it requires new thinking on several levels: at a societal level (reforms of teacher education), at a municipal level, and at an institutional level (programmes and in-service provisions and actions). In this report, identifying innovative approaches is one of the six themes explored, while the others capture characteristics of significant pillars of European country systems for professional development.

B. Research settings and methods

1. Brief introduction of CARE project partners

In the European Union's Europe 2020 Strategy, the need for all young people to have opportunities to develop their talents to the fullest possible extent is strongly emphasised as a means of securing Europe's growth, competitiveness and high standards of living. The key role of high-quality ECEC in reaching these goals is further supported by CARE's D2.1 report (2015), 'Overview of European ECEC Curricula and Curriculum Template'. This report pointed to professional development as a key to improving ECEC quality. However, as shown here in the 3.1 report, there is still a lack of knowledge regarding how ECEC systems of professional development in Europe have been constructed and have developed over recent years.

The analyses in this report contribute with new knowledge regarding the systems of initial teacher training and continuing professional development within Europe, based on data from 10 European countries. The work of this research team aims to further develop the European knowledge base on ECEC and construct a framework based on competences and skills that young people need to develop in current societies. One of the main overarching objectives of the CARE project is to further examine pre-service and in-service practices in order to analyse how professional development systems improve teachers' knowledge, skills, and overall competences to meet new challenges, and how ECEC providers become equipped to meet the demands of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Responsibility for this report is taken by the Danish team. The Polish team contributed by analysing ECEC statistics, which formed the "Introductory snapshots" sub-section of each country report, and the Italian team has collaborated in the "Innovative approaches" sub-section by reviewing the country reports and developing follow-up questions on this theme and will contribute to WP 3.2 by developing a design for case studies on innovative approaches in ECEC professional development systems, as explored through the country-report analyses. The Dutch team provided critical feedback on the report.

2. Design and methods

We will now outline the design and methods of the comparative analyses of professional development in ECEC systems in Europe. First, the research questions are presented. Secondly, the data collection methods (a questionnaire) are presented alongside procedures for our cross-country analyses. Thirdly and finally, the condensation of results into additional insights is described.

Research questions

This report addresses the following research questions from the field of ECEC and professional development strategies:

1. Are countries' policies and professional development systems (pre-service and in-service) aimed at strengthening educational attainment and competence development among ECEC staff likely to lead to improved professional competences in meeting the range of demands and challenges of today's societies?
2. To what extent are professional development systems responding to increasing expectations that ECEC staff are able to identify and implement standards for high-quality services and meet children's needs, both in general and for the most vulnerable?
3. Which conditions (e.g. resources, policy and local authorities' prioritisation of high-level services) are provided for professional competence development (pre-service) and for sustainable workforce development (in-service), and to what extent are innovative approaches to ECEC systems under development in CARE's participating European countries?

The overall aim is to address the question: how can the findings contribute to future policy, practice and research development and thereby contribute to the field by highlighting which challenges European ECEC systems face in today's societies, and how can these challenges be met through an improved professional development ECEC system?

Questionnaire development and data gathering procedures (i.e. WP3's 13 questions)

The data used in the analyses are developed through country reports that are based on 13 questions WP3 posed to the CARE project's partners (May-June, 2014) through a questionnaire (see Appendix A). WP3 also asked partners for references to key national policy documents as well as reports on professional development systems which were incorporated in the analyses. In WP3's questionnaire on professional development systems in the early childhood sector, we defined ECEC professional development as the set of organised activities in education and/or in practice that promote education, training and development of practitioners who work or will work with young children from birth to the age of eight, and their families.

As mentioned in the introduction (Part A), professional development applies to a full range of activities that attempt to increase the knowledge base, skill sets and attitudinal perspectives of early years practitioners and professionals, utilised as they engage in home visits, parent education, child care, preschool education, kindergarten to third grade teaching and educational support services (Harvard Family Research Project, 2004, cited in Sheridan et al., 2009). Professional development

programmes include pre-service training at the vocational, bachelor and master level, and ongoing professional development processes that take place in ECEC centres, such as through in-service training or lifelong learning initiatives related to ECEC.

Our data build on the answers partners provided in the questionnaire, based on the following definition: professional development in ECEC takes place as such to accomplish *two primary objectives*: 1) It is anticipated that professional development will advance the knowledge, skills and dispositions of early years professionals through pre-service education and, thereby, improve the practices in ECEC, leading to higher quality, improved child wellbeing, and better child outcomes. 2) Professional development also aims at promoting a culture of ongoing professional growth of individual professionals and of the ECEC systems in which they work. This aspect is sometimes referred to as continuous professional development and includes a cyclic dynamism (with recurrent cycles of planning, observing, evaluating, reflecting, and changing) that moves practice towards higher quality.

In the country reports, we were interested in information provided by partners on both objectives listed above.

After analysing the data in each country report, we sent reports back to partners to ask them to review the analyses and validate what this report's research team highlighted as important results. The data were divided into six themes: Theme 1: Pre-service professional development: ECEC educators' qualification requirements, standards and resources; Theme 2: Characteristics of in-service professional development for ECEC educators; Theme 3: ECEC educators' role, responsibility and quality concepts; Theme 4: Policy developments and reforms; Theme 5: Quality assurance regulation, monitoring and evaluation; and finally, Theme 6: Innovative approaches.

Analysis procedures (i.e. why the subdivisions in individual country analyses?)

As a first step, WP3 performed a preliminary analysis looking at the standards, discourses and innovations in answers provided by partners to the WP3 questionnaire. Based on this first review and analysis, we began to perceive some trends, which developed into the six themes presented in each of the country-specific sections of this report. To complement this, we gathered some general information on the current status of ECEC provisions per country, with references to staff/child ratios, public versus private provisions, attendance rates, etc. and thus, WP3's Polish partners took on the challenge of collating statistics and providing some interpretations for our "Introductory snapshot" sub-section. Meanwhile, WP3's Italian partners took the lead in probing for further information, including examples that could further elucidate innovative intentions and practices within each country context. Following a second validation process of country-specific sections with CARE partners, the Danish WP3 team, with its Polish and Italian partners, drafted a final revision to the analyses. In section III, insights and reflections, cross-country trends and discourses emerged based on analyses and comparisons with other studies, and compared to the earlier assumptions concerning how professional development systems in a modern society have to enable professionals not just to adjust knowledge and skills, but also to use their new tools competently in practice.

Additional insights

These analyses and findings resulted in the three "Additional insights", presented in part IV. of this report: reflection and critical reflection in practice; ECEC and the vulnerable; and, innovative approaches that build on professional development networks and communities of practice. For the first, we see an emerging focus on including reflection in the practices of ECEC educators, both in pre-service and in-service professional training, also by engaging with various ECEC stakeholders. This focus is significant in that it holds the potential of ensuring long-term changes in ECEC and supporting a renewal of practice. In the second insight, there is a discussion about the disparity in

approaches to working with the vulnerable across European ECEC – identifying 'who' the vulnerable are is highly contextualised; yet there is still a lack of knowledge in this area as some countries remain reluctant to segregate early learners or label any of them as vulnerable or disadvantaged. As a whole, the topic remains controversial and in need of further research. Thirdly, we can perceive an increased importance of communities of practice for the future of ECEC – also as a source for innovative approaches.

These additional insights will be discussed in a cross-country analysis as their impact on current and future ECEC professional development – both pre-service and in-service – is notable, seen in light of the gaps we identified through our review of recent reports and research, and in relation to meeting new ECEC challenges in a postmodern society.

C. Concepts and definitions

The following concepts and definitions have been used for both developing the questionnaire for data collection, and for the data analysis portions of the research presented in this report. Some are fairly straightforward and have been operationalised so that a common vocabulary could be used cross-country. Others are rooted in previous research and conceptual work, denoting meaning that may be distinct to this project.

Innovative approaches to professional development

Based on a review of literature, Baregheh, Rowley, and Sambrook (2009) define innovation as follows: 'Innovation is the multi-stage process whereby organisations transform ideas into new/improved products, service or processes, in order to advance, compete and differentiate themselves successfully in their marketplace' (Baregheh et al., 2009, p. 1334). In this definition, the focus is limited to the commercial sector; however, the idea of renewal by transforming ideas into new products, services or processes applies to the topic of the CARE project, in particular quality as related to professional development. Related to ECEC, it makes sense to propose a broader, more social understanding, e.g. Dawson and Daniel's concept of social innovation: 'social innovation – refers to the processes of collective idea generation, selection and implementation by people who participate collaboratively to meet social challenges' (2010, p. 16).

Towards a framework and guidelines for the CARE study: Innovation is defined by differentiating between three levels: 1) the political approach to professional development (form, content, delivery modes, etc.); 2) the inter-organisational and collaborative aspects that contribute to new approaches to ECEC; and 3) professional development focused on developing innovative competences among ECEC educators (i.e. seeking to ensure practice innovation beyond the scope of the original course of professional development by teaching practitioners themselves to innovate by incorporating new knowledge/ideas and reflecting upon practice).

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring may entail that local authorities collect information on attendance rates for in-service training within a municipal sector on a regular basis. Monitoring is about checking whether the curriculum is implemented as intended in the legislation, if the children's learning and development has improved, and if the professional's skills meet external demands and challenges. Evaluation on a national level might be quality assurance that the government asks for on a regular basis, e.g. every second year, based on quality measures, both related to structural and processual measures, and regarding safety and health related aspects. In some countries this is done by inspectorates; in others, by self-monitoring.

Professional development

Professional development applies to a full range of activities that attempt to increase the knowledge base, skills sets and attitudinal perspectives of early years practitioners and professionals as they engage in child care, preschool education, and kindergarten to third grade teaching, as well as educational support services, home visits and parent education (Harvard Family Research Project, 2004, cited in Sheridan et al., 2009), as well as related activities such as parent support. Professional development programmes are composed of pre-service training at the vocational, bachelor's or master's level, and the ongoing professional development processes that take place in the ECEC centres, such as in-service-training or lifelong learning initiatives related to ECEC.

Quality

ECEC is often defined by two types of quality: 1) structural characteristics such as group size, child-to-staff ratio, and teacher qualifications (e.g. Howes et al., 2008; Thomason & La Paro, 2009; Slot et al., 2014); and 2) process characteristics, such as children's day-to-day experiences in ECEC settings, encompassing the social, emotional, physical and instructional aspects of children's activities and interactions with teachers, peers, and materials that are seen as the proximal determinants of child development (Slot et al., 2014, p. 48). The evidence for strong and consistent relationships between structural and process quality is far from conclusive (Slot et al., 2014.),

Quality assurance

Different systems of quality assurance exist. Some countries let municipalities decide for themselves how to assess quality and ECEC educator skills, and individual ECEC settings might also assess quality and collect feedback through such means as parental surveys.

Reforms

Reforms are defined as renewal of policy, legislation in the ECEC field, and renewal of teacher training in ways so that future educators develop new lasting skills during their undergraduate education.

Resources

Resources are related to the funding of ECEC activity, from a national government, a municipality, European funds, etc., that ECEC centres and ECEC professionals can draw from. Several country reports note economic cutbacks in their countries, resulting from the economic crisis and decreased funding in the ECEC sector. Resources are often linked to child/staff ratios, and a high ratio might hinder the implementation of curriculum and high-quality ECEC. However, resources are also related to the resources that municipalities apply for in relation to the training of educators in in-service professional development systems.

Staff – professionals in ECEC

The conceptualisation of staff in ECEC differs among European countries. In the U.S. the most common concept of staff in day care is preschool teachers. In other countries, staff are referred to as social workers or pedagogues; e.g. in Denmark most often the term *pædagog* is used, but social workers, preschool teachers, caregivers, nurses, and early years professionals are also used.

Standards

Standards may be related to three aspects of ECEC. First, resources are often related to the documentation of children's learning. They can be based on fixed learning goals, as common

standards described in national guidelines or curricula in some countries, but more often there are no such standards. Instead, the acts of observing, listening and recording children's learning processes come into focus. Standards are also used in relation to the documentation of best practices implemented by professionals, also in relation to their professional development.

Teachers/ECEC educators

There is a long, project-wide discussion that precedes the operational choice of terminology referring to ECEC staff in this report – from aides, to caregivers, educators, teachers, pedagogues, childminders, etc. Although no unanimous cross-country terminology could be agreed upon, we will make use of the term 'educator(s)' to designate those who hold the charge of caring for and educating children attending ECEC. Whenever using the term teacher in this report, we are specifically referring to individuals who have achieved certification as teachers (i.e. through formal education and qualification). In this way, the use of the term 'ECEC educator' may include staff that are teachers, but when using the term 'teacher', ECEC staff who do not hold teacher qualification are excluded.

Teacher/educator quality

By definition educators who provide instruction and stimulate ECEC that leads to positive child outcomes are high-quality educators (Early et al., 2007). Educator quality is not the same as level of education; teacher/educator quality encompasses a broad array of knowledge, skills and behaviours in addition to educational level, but educator quality is a precondition for quality enhancement in ECEC. Thus, identifying and supporting high quality educators is important, and that goes beyond pre-service training. In this report, educators' roles and quality will be addressed by each country, individually so that contextual differences may be highlighted.

Vulnerable, socially disadvantaged children

Not having provided a definition of 'socially disadvantaged' to countries encouraged them to define it contextually. They have variously denoted 'special needs children', 'immigrant children', 'disabled children', and children from 'low income' households, children with 'unemployed parents', 'poor' children, 'at-risk' children and families and children from 'single-parent' families.

D. Preview of report structure

The report is structured as follows. Firstly this introduction highlights objectives and the literature base for the study, the definitions of the study's important key concepts, and the design and primary research questions for the study. Secondly the analyses presented in the following chapters begin with the individual country analyses, structured around the six themes that were chosen as the analytical framework: 1) pre-service professional development: ECEC educators' qualification requirements, standards and resources; 2) characteristics of in-service professional development for ECEC educators; 3) ECEC educators' role, responsibility and quality concepts; 4) policy developments and reforms; 5) quality assurance regulation, monitoring and evaluation; and 6) highlights of innovative approaches. There are differences according to differing ways of reporting on the questions; however, through analyses we have pursued comparability throughout the country reports. Thirdly, we present the cross-country analysis with an emphasis on impact and implications through the same six themes, as well as additional insights that analyses brought to light. Lastly, discussion of trends, strengths and weaknesses, and a conclusion based on the study's research questions are submitted.

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II. Individual country analyses

In this section, we present the results from our questionnaire on professional development in ECEC European systems, across 10 European countries. We have organised the findings along six themes and introduced each country analysis with an introductory snapshot of the individual ECEC system so as to provide some context. These individual country analyses directly inform part III. Synthesis of individual country analyses, and part IV. Additional insights, of this report.

A. Denmark

Introductory snapshot

There are more public ECEC providers than non-public providers for institutions that provide ECEC to both younger children (up to two years old) and older children (three to five years old), though the difference is fairly balanced: 64% (183 settings) of settings for the younger children and 67% (1052 settings) for older children are governed by public authorities. The total number of institutions for children up to two years old (284 settings) is significantly lower than for the older children (1578 settings).

In terms of the youngest children, under one year of age, less than one-fifth attend ECEC settings (19%). Regarding children between one and two years of age, the situation is significantly different, as over 90% of children are enrolled in the ECEC system. For three- to five-year-olds, the attendance rate is slightly higher (97%). In total, in 2013 almost all children from between the ages of one and five were enrolled in some type of ECEC setting (94%).

Data concerning professional careers of ECEC training graduates is not gathered by any institution in the country.

Pre-service professional development: ECEC educators' qualification requirements, standards and resources

The term *pædagog* in Denmark refers to a specific profession. By taking a degree in social education, students become pedagogues, a position that includes work with "development and care assignments within the following areas: children and young people (including working in day nurseries, day care centres, preschool classes, recreation centres/school-based leisure time facilities, after-school clubs, 24-hour service institutions); institutions for children, young people and adults with reduced psychological or physical capacities; adults with social problems (homelessness, substance abuse, psychological disorders); family institutions; and child and youth psychiatric hospitals. "Additionally, the education leads to qualification for working in the field of crime prevention in neighbourhoods, for example, as well as working within the Prison and Probation Service (Ministry of Higher Education and Science, 2014). The term preschool teacher here refers to educated staff working in ECEC day cares. The term pedagogical assistant refers to staff that are not educated at a bachelor's degree level.

The legal framework in Denmark makes no stipulations in terms of mandatory qualification requirements for those working in day cares for children up to the age of six, whether centre-based or home-based. Municipalities are required to ensure day care staff have the "necessary" qualifications regarding ECEC provisions as part of the task of quality assurance and monitoring, but these requirements are not further stipulated and are the responsibility of each Danish municipality.

Day care providers receive funding based on the number of enrolled children, and they are then responsible for ensuring that expenditure, including the total salary bill, does not exceed the allotted amount. There can be considerable local variation. Salaries are tied to collective agreements based on qualification level and experience; hence, in basic terms, providers must choose between employing fewer, but more highly educated staff, or a greater number of less-educated staff. Despite these differences, centre-based day cares in Denmark – whether settings specifically for younger children

(*vuggestuer* for zero- to two-year-olds), older children (*børnehaver* for three- to six-year-olds) or age-integrated settings (*aldersintegrerede institutioner* for children between zero and six) – are likely to employ a mixture of staff with different educational levels: preschool teachers (*pædagog*) and assistants (*pædagogmedhjælper*). Employment as a preschool teacher requires a bachelor's degree, while there are no qualification requirements for assistants, although those with specific vocational childcare qualifications as a pedagogical assistant (*pædagogisk assistentuddannelse*) are placed at a higher pay grade.

Turning to home-based day care, there are no mandatory national qualification standards, although local authorities may require the completion of various courses. Educated pedagogues fulfil a supervisory and supporting role within home-based day cares. Qualification as a pedagogue is mandatory for those working in school reception classes (six-year-olds). Similarly, the first three primary school grades (between the ages of seven and nine) are taught by qualified teachers, but pedagogues may perform certain tasks and play a supportive role.

For after-school care, the same situation applies regarding centre-based day care; i.e. it is carried out by a mixture of pedagogues and assistants.

In terms of longer courses leading to formal qualifications (master's and diploma programmes), courses are offered at institutions of higher education, primarily the university colleges also responsible for pre-service training and the former Danish School of Education, now Aarhus University's Department of Education. Participants pay for their studies, although employers may cover some or all costs.

There are two primary qualification levels within the field of ECEC: preschool teacher and pedagogical assistant. The first result in a qualification as a bachelor of social education, requiring three years and a half of study at a university college. Entry requirements are one of the following:

- A general upper secondary diploma;
- Vocational training as a social and health care assistant as well as certain subject-specific requirements;
- Specific upper secondary level qualifications in the following subjects: Danish, English, social studies, and one other;
- Vocational training as pedagogical assistant as well as certain subject-specific requirements.

Following a recent reform (implemented in 2014), the course consists of a common introductory year, after which students choose between three fields of specialisation, one of which targets those wishing to work within the day care sector (the other two target those wishing to work in schools and after-school care, or within the area of social and special pedagogy (Ministry of Higher Education and Science, 2014).

The emphasis on competence aims is a continuation of earlier policies. Students need to develop not only knowledge and skills regarding ECEC, but also meet general and specific competence goals related to the field of ECEC in day care. These competence goals are related to an educator's ability to use theoretical knowledge and experience-based skills in practice. It is required that educators work with reflection, planning and implementing theoretical knowledge into practice. As expressed in the reform, the competence goals in the common part of the pre-service education are to apply some basic professional competences that provide teachers with the skills to support and facilitate development, learning, personal wellbeing, citizenship and intellectual growth for children, adolescents and adults. The competence areas are: 1) pedagogical environments and activities; 2) profession and society; and

3) social education in practice – first practicum period. In addition, educators choose a specialisation in order to work within ECEC, called day care education.

Degree holders who complete the specialisation of special education have the competences to be employed within the field of pedagogical work for zero- to five-year-olds. They have particular competences to conceive of and develop pedagogical environments and activities in which optimal conditions are created on the basis of a professional, pedagogical foundation, used towards a stimulating and safe life for children.

Competence areas in this part of the educational curriculum are: 1) childhood, culture and learning; 2) profession and organisation; 3) professional relations and communication – second practicum period; and, 4) cooperation and development – third practicum period. This first area aims at the inclusion of culture, nature and aesthetic forms of expression in pedagogical activities that support children's development, intellectual growth and learning.

The professional competence goals (for working with children aged zero to five) are that the educator is able to utilise nature, as well as cultural media and forms of expression to create developmental and learning processes, and furthermore incorporate the perspectives of children into play and pedagogical activities.

The second area aims at the organisational conditions for professional, pedagogical practice, including cooperation with parents, volunteers and other professions. And the competence goals are that the student can reflect, assess, explain and qualify pedagogical work on the basis of the organisational and professional conditions.

The third area, professional relations and communication – the second practicum period – aims at relational work, interaction and communication in pedagogical practice with zero- to five-year-old children, including the significance of children's diverse life conditions with respect to wellbeing, relationships and communication. The competence goals in this area are that the student knows how to create relationships with individual children and with whole groups of children, can support the children when they are making relationships with each other, can support the development of children's communicative competences, can master professional communication and can reflect on their own abilities to communicate and form relationships.

Lastly, the fourth competence area of cooperation and development and third practicum period aim at systematic and knowledge-based reflection upon and contribution to development and innovation within pedagogical practice. The competence goals within this area are that the student must be able to plan, implement, document and evaluate activities and learning processes in a focused way that supports children's wellbeing, learning, intellectual growth and development. In this context, the student must be able to challenge existing practice in professional terms, to look for and assess alternative options and to contribute to the development of pedagogical practice. The course includes this in all four practical internship periods.

Students with at least five years of relevant work experience need only complete two periods of internship, thereby reducing their study time to two years and a half. It is also possible to follow the course through internet-based distance learning, allowing greater flexibility.

Qualification as a pedagogical assistant is part of the upper-secondary vocational education and training system. The course alternates between periods at college and workplace internships. Those with work experience within childcare can receive credit transfers for internship periods and thereby substantially reduce the course length. In terms of entry requirements for training as a pedagogical

assistant, the course is currently open to anyone who has completed compulsory lower-secondary education[1]. From 2015, however, minimum requirements will be introduced regarding grades in the subjects of mathematics and Danish. Note that, as stated above, qualification as a pedagogical assistant is not mandatory for employment in an assistant position. In some cases, the course will be taken as in-service training by those already employed in such positions, while continuing to work part-time, with the support of their employer. A qualification as a pedagogical assistant also offers an alternative entry route to the pedagogue education for those without a general upper-secondary diploma.

Educated pedagogues have received a comprehensive education concerning ECEC and have a strong professional identity, both internally and within society. However, a substantial number of those working in day care centres have no particular qualifications for work with young children. While vocational training as a pedagogical assistant has been available since 2008, a study from 2013[2] indicated relatively low employment levels following graduation. It would seem clear that further efforts are necessary to increase awareness of the professional profile of qualified assistants if they are to replace (cheaper) assistants and thereby raise the overall qualification levels of those working with young children in response to a growing focus on quality within ECEC.

In summary, in Denmark the final qualifications are on a bachelor's level. However, there are differences between the educational levels of the staff in early year's provisions. Regarding resources for in-service training and further professional development, there are no formal frameworks but in practice there are standards set by local authorities. Standards differ between pre-service and in-service and also differ between the roles of ECEC workers. And, resources differ between municipalities. There is a tendency for municipalities to spend more on specific politically determined initiatives, e.g. language priorities. However most municipalities have the same types of areas of intervention due to the law and reforms.

Characteristics of in-service professional development for ECEC educators

While the system of pre-service education and training for pedagogues is well-developed, and after the reform (2014), even more developed with clear competence aims as shown above, the same does not apply to in-service training.

There are opportunities for qualified pedagogues to undertake further education leading to formal qualifications at either a master's or diploma-degree level. Both diploma-degrees and master's degrees within the field of pedagogy cover a broad array of more specialised subjects, some of which are targeted at ECEC professionals (while others primarily address e.g. schoolteachers or adult educators). These programmes are equivalent to one year's full-time study, but are organised as part-time study. In both cases, participants usually continue to work part-time while studying and receive some form of financial support from their employer. However, the same barriers exist as with shorter-term in-service training.

As with pre-service, longer courses leading to formal qualifications (master's and diploma programmes) are offered at institutions of higher education, primarily the university colleges also

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[1] More information is available in Danish at https://www.ug.dk/uddannelser/erhvervsuddannelser/den-paedagogiske-assistentuddannelse

[2] Available in Danish at https://www.lfs.dk/8826

responsible for pre-service training and the former Danish School of Education, now Aarhus University's Department of Education. Participants pay for their studies, although employers may cover some or all costs. However, as of 2014, legislative changes mean that it is no longer possible for day care centres to receive state educational grants (SVU) covering expenses during an employee's absence while participating in such courses. This cutback is balanced, however, by increased funding of job rotation schemes. Yet, it is still too early to determine the effects of the changes of the rules regarding state grants for reimbursement (for which pedagogues are no longer eligible) and the increased funding for job rotation schemes.

For short-term courses, much depends on changes in municipal finances and priorities. There does seem to be a tendency, particularly in larger municipalities, for spending on professional development within ECEC to be increasingly tied to specific politically determined initiatives, whereby municipalities exert a greater influence in terms of determining content.

For home-based day care, the lack of pedagogical qualifications among practitioners poses a challenge in light of the quality discourse. If home-based day care is to continue to constitute a viable alternative to day care centres and provide learning-oriented pedagogical content rather than just child-minding, there would seem to be a need for standard pre-service qualifications and/or an extensive system of in-service training. The latter, of course, is hard to implement as it is difficult for practitioners to spend the necessary time away from the children in their care.

In summary, educators' work in the field of ECEC is constantly evolving. New challenges and new requirements mean that the work content and the expectations placed on teachers and educators from institutional leaders and policy makers change from year to year. If the individual employee and the institution are to be able to meet the policy objectives, continued professional competence development is crucial (EVA, 2012).

The Danish qualification system is on the one hand largely self-organised and on the other hand there are few resources available for in-service trainings and little time set aside for them, and no long-term frameworks related to the demands in Denmark's Quality reform (2010[3]). Power over standards is as such generally guided by a national childcare act, and then diffused to the local/regional governments for governance. In-service training is also often broadly self-organised with access to some form of subsidy, however this is not guaranteed. Also, as stated earlier there are differences between the levels and types of professional pre-service development as well as in-service professional development (i.e. between pedagogues versus assistants and home-based providers versus school-based ECEC providers), and this in turn, impacts educational planning and provisions.

In-service training, in the form of short courses, workshops and so on, is organised by a number of agencies, including local authorities, the trade union, university colleges and private organisations, as well as small-scale initiatives at the centre level. Sometimes, particularly when participation is mandatory, courses will be conducted during working hours with costs covered by local authorities or the day care centres and schools themselves. The union may also offer subsidised courses to members, although these are more likely to take place during the preschool educators' spare time. In other cases, all costs are paid by the individual.

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[3] This reform specifically addressed the need for high quality public service and innovative approaches to quality in the public sector in order to meet the challenges facing the public sector. There was a focus on ECEC, care for the elderly and hospitals. The reform contained 180 separate initiatives, including a goal that public employees should have an education providing the necessary competences to provide high quality service and a framework for competence development throughout their working lives, as well as, for example, a goal that public sector institutions in Denmark should be among the most innovative in the world, be decentralised, whereby local authorities should offer greater autonomy to institutions.

There are no set rules regarding public funding of in-service training for ECEC practitioners. As such, there is considerable variation from municipality to municipality and from year to year. On occasion, government funding may be made available, such as in conjunction with the introduction of new educational curricula. The government-funded job rotation scheme reimburses employers who hire an unemployed person in a temporary position while permanent staff take part in further education. While this funding is not specifically targeted at the ECEC sector, figures from 2012 show that pedagogues make good use of the scheme (see Ahrenkiel, Frederiksen, Helms, & Krab, 2012). This scheme can also be used by unqualified assistants to obtain a pedagogical assistant qualification.

ECEC educators' role, responsibility and quality concepts

Each day care institution is required to compile an educational curriculum based on the demands of the National ECEC Curriculum. The suggested first step is a description of the day care's values, pedagogical principles and concept of learning. It is a requirement that relevant pedagogical methods and activities for achieving relevant learning outcomes are outlined. These methods and activities should be grounded in theory, professionally substantiated and tried out in practice. Likewise, the pedagogical values and principles and the concept of learning should draw upon professional knowledge, theoretical developments and practice within the actual institutional context.

As such, although the legislation does not specifically address the qualifications of ECEC professionals, the guidelines for compiling educational curricula make quite considerable demands on their professional knowledge and skills. The actual responsibility for the compilation and quality assurance of the educational curriculum belongs to the manager of the individual day care facility and the municipality as well.

While there was some government funding for in-service courses in working with educational curricula following their introduction, as well as a number of government-produced brochures, guidelines and inspirational materials, this is largely the responsibility of municipal authorities. Many municipalities have developed their own courses and/or materials intended to support day care facilities in their efforts to qualify the work with educational curricula.

In terms of pre-service training, the recent reforms and the greater degree of specialisation for those expecting to work within ECEC mean that educators' curriculum more directly addresses the implementation of educational curricula. As well as obtaining broader competences regarding the formulation of learning goals, means and methods in relation to a number of subjects, ECEC educators and pre-service students are specifically expected to be able to compile educational curricula and to plan, conduct and evaluate pedagogical activities based on such a curriculum. Similarly, they are expected to be able to document and evaluate their own role in pedagogical practice, including reflection on the quality of learning processes.

As a whole, teachers and ECEC educators in Denmark are responsible for implementing the national curriculum and meeting the quality standards as delineated in legislation. Teachers are trained (through pre-service professional development) to work with children's learning, play and development in ways that are grounded in theory and the national legislation, and for trying it out in practice. Managers of day care centres and the municipalities are responsible for the implementation of quality through in-service development.

Policy developments and reforms

With the introduction of educational curricula within day care in 2004 (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2004) came new demands for ECEC staff in terms of establishing learning goals, planning pedagogical content aimed at meeting these goals, and documenting their work. These demands required the additional training of ECEC professionals. There are changes and a focus on raising standards, which can be seen in light of a general tendency for ECEC in Denmark to focus more on children's learning than only on play and childcare. In turn, this reflects a broader focus on learning outcomes resulting, in part, from Danish children's relatively poor showings on PISA tests.

There has been some criticism of the changes to pedagogue training, particularly from the Danish Union of Early Childhood and Youth Educators. They have expressed concern regarding the introduction of fields of specialisation, including the risk of hierarchical division. Less uniform training, it is argued, can undermine a sense of common professional identity. Another criticism is that only those choosing to specialise in social and special pedagogy will receive practical training within this area. With the growing focus on inclusion within schools and day cares, all pedagogues need to be prepared to work with children with special needs, and the new structure, it is argued, does not equip them to do so. Inclusive ECEC practices are addressed in Denmark's 2004 Day care Act (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2004), and in the Task Force on Future Daycare (Task Force For Fremtidens Dagtilbud, 2012) as an approach to vulnerable children.

The recent reform to the structure and content of the training course for prospective pedagogues has introduced a greater degree of specialisation. After a common introductory year, students have to choose between the above-mentioned three fields of specialisation. The aim is to increase standards, and other changes aimed at meeting this goal include testing throughout the course, including periods of internship, and replacing a syllabus centred on what students should read with a set of competence requirements, focusing on students' expected learning outcomes.

In summary, there is an increase in demand for pre-service academic qualification. However, ECEC training in Denmark is still largely self-regulated and there is an unequal distribution between municipalities and areas. Lastly, the growing demand implies that there is a need for more and qualifying in-service professional development training that is currently going unmet by the resources.

Quality assurance regulation, monitoring and evaluation

Municipalities are required to monitor the quality of day cares under their jurisdictions. One element of this quality assurance process is to ensure that staff members have the necessary qualifications to meet the objectives and quality parameters set out by the municipality and the requirements of the Act on Day Care. Higher education courses provided by universities and university colleges are subject to the same regulations and quality assurance mechanisms as all other courses of higher education. The primary pre-service qualification, the bachelor's of social education, is offered by university colleges. These are self-governing institutions, with the primary responsibility placed on a board of governors. Monitoring of higher education is performed by the Danish Agency for Higher Education. This monitoring is partly systematic, performed at fixed intervals, and partly ad-hoc, performed as and when deemed necessary. A plan for these monitoring activities is published annually.

Another quality assurance measure is three-year development contracts between the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education and individual institutions. These contracts contain

between three and five binding objectives as identified by the Ministry and a corresponding number selected by the institution. Progress towards these objectives is reported annually.

As of 2013, the accreditation system, led by the Danish Accreditation Institution and aiming to ensure the quality of higher education (including the bachelor's of social education) has changed from a focus on the accreditation of educational programmes to a focus on accreditation of providing institutions. As a result, the institutions themselves are given the responsibility for establishing a system to ensure the quality and relevance of the programmes they offer.

A 2012 report from Rambøll, published in Danish and available online, evaluated pre-service trainings at the request of the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education. The report found that overall, pre-service students are gaining a broad array of relevant competences, but lack practical skills like creating action plans, producing administrative documents, communicating and talking about sensitive subjects with parents, and so on.

Another 2012 report on pedagogues' participation in in-service training found that professional development opportunities are largely tied to current priorities within local authorities, superseding individual competence development, and with little long-term planning. EVA (2012) found that further in-service professional competence development is needed in order to improve staff's abilities to meet new challenges and demands. A major barrier is a lack of resources, with pedagogues unwilling to leave colleagues in the lurch in order to pursue their individual desire for in-service training.

As a whole, Danish higher education institutions are regulated in all theory provisions, but no regulations or quality mechanisms for in-service professional development provisions exist. There are no national regulations or quality assurance systems concerning other forms of in-service training. Generally, quality and monitoring is self-organised and decentralised in the ECEC system.

Highlights of innovative approaches

A traditional understanding is that innovation is the first commercialisation of a new idea/invention. Based on a review of the literature, Baregheh, Rowley, and Sambrook (2009) define innovation as follows: "Innovation is the multi-stage process whereby organisations transform ideas into new/improved products, service or processes, in order to advance, compete and differentiate themselves successfully in their marketplace." We suggest that a useful working definition is as follows: "social innovation refers to the processes of collective idea generation, selection and implementation by people who participate collaboratively to meet social challenges' (Dawson & Daniel, 2010, p. 16).

In relation to ECEC, we suggest differentiating between innovations on three levels: 1) a system level innovation (form, content, delivery modes, e.g. in the reforms of teacher education) to professional development (macro-level), 2); on an inter-organisational level, innovative approaches relate to the interplay which is needed in a modern time between sectors, e.g. the educational, the research and the municipal sectors, and innovation will consist of new creative ways to collaborate for change e.g. living conditions and educational opportunities for all children and young people starting in ECEC (meso-level); and 3) an individual and organisational learning level which is professional development focused on developing innovative competences among individual ECEC professionals and in communities of practice, i.e. seeking to ensure practice innovation beyond the scope of the original course of professional development by teaching practitioners themselves to innovate by incorporating new knowledge/ideas and reflecting upon practice (micro-level).

In the Danish context of ECEC, the concept of innovation is now included in the reform for bachelor-level education (Ministry of Higher Education and Science, 2014). The entire reform is defined as innovative in the pre-service professional development system in itself, as it aims to improve preschool teachers' competences to meet new challenges in a modern society (a macro-level), e.g. issues of social inequality and inclusion. Preschool teachers are supposed to meet such challenges by making changes in practice based on theoretical, evidence-based knowledge and by using critical reflection systematically in a way that qualifies ECEC practice and high quality ECEC. They are also educated to meet new demands in order to collaborate between sectors (a meso-level). For the third level (micro-level), the focus is both on educators' individual competence development (reflective practitioner, lifelong learning approach, organisational learning approaches) and/or an emphasis can be placed on professionals' collaborative innovative competences in order to change practices in ECEC daily practices and organisations.

Two Examples of innovative approaches to in-service professional development programmes in ECEC conducted in Denmark will be highlighted here. First, the *VIDA Programme, Knowledge-based efforts for socially disadvantaged children in day care. VIDA* (Jensen, 2012), was developed and evaluated in four municipalities 2010-2013 (120 centres):

- Implementing evidence-based knowledge within everyday practice in ECEC;
- Attention and specific training with regards to socially disadvantaged children in day care;
- Critical reflection on setting goals and working on best practices within staff groups;
- Developing staff competences to work innovatively with learning and organisational change processes.

In the VIDA project, an in-service professional development programme for social innovation in preschools was developed, in order to explore and seek answers to the question of if/how professional development can contribute to enhancing high-quality ECEC, learning conditions and the wellbeing of all children and in particular, socially disadvantaged children, e.g. children who are influenced by socio-cultural deprived living conditions (poverty, families without work, etc.) and the consequences of social inequality. Here, social innovation is defined as the renewal and improvement of practices in preschools with a view to countering social inequality. The in-service professional development programmes and experiments which were developed in the context of VIDA can be understood as preconditions for creating social innovation in ECEC. On the basis of the VIDA approach, the findings showed that an innovative approach to in-service professional development programmes might lead to permanent changes in the way preschools deal with the challenges of social inheritance, as outlined above. Publications in Danish and papers in progress demonstrate how VIDA's professional development programme worked with critical reflection, planning and on an experimental approach to change (training) in preschools. Furthermore the analyses showed how the interaction between the educational part of the programme and the experiments conducted in practice contributed to creating social innovation in practice (Brandi & Jensen, 2014). Additionally, the programme had effects on all children's socio-emotional development and learning, measured by SDQ (Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire) (Jensen et al., 2015).

The example was reported as a promising one as far as innovation in in-service professional development is concerned. It provides in-service professional development to ECEC professionals, qualifying them to implement evidence-based knowledge within their everyday practice, particularly concerning socially disadvantaged children in day cares. The VIDA programme builds on a previous programme, the ASP, which was conducted and evaluated between 2005-2009 (Jensen et al., 2013). Both programmes were financed by the Danish Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs.

Secondly, the *Abecedarian Programme, within an Innovative Implementation Framework in preschool for children 0-3 years old (APIIF)* will be developed and tested in one municipality (five nurseries and five family day cares) in 2015. The APIIF project targets children from birth up to the age three in family childcare homes and nurseries in Denmark. This programme takes inspiration from and further develops the VIDA in-service professional development model with the Abecedarian Approach to ECEC. Educators in selected family childcare homes and nurseries are invited to participate in a new professional development programme. The testing period begin with a four-day kick-off course for day care managers, consultants from the municipality and other experts, as well as the group of implementing agents. APIIF is financed by Trygfondens Centre for Child Research. Key concepts of the APIIF programme are: high-quality early learning; innovative implementation practices including critical reflection; improved child outcomes.

Evidence from the OECD (2012) indicates that an early start with ECEC programmes is of crucial importance in order to provide for the development and learning conditions of all children. The evaluation questions that will be answered by the proposed scale-up randomised controlled trial (RCT) study are in line with the focus of the OECD, pointing to a growing body of evidences that children who start training their learning and social-emotional skills early will have better outcomes when they grow older. In addition, the OECD has highlighted the quality of ECEC provision as essential in ensuring such positive outcomes and long-term productivity benefits to society. The focus of OECD (2012) policy lever 3 – to improve qualifications, training and working conditions – is in line with the thinking behind the VIDA and the APIIF programmes, i.e. that the expected quality improvement and gain in child development occur though systematic qualification strategies conducted by in-service professional development programmes for the people who are responsible for the youngest children.

A similar focus on quality is found in Danish ECEC policy, as reflected in the work of the Task Force on Future Daycare (Task Force For Fremtidens Dagtilbud, 2012), who identified four key quality indicators:

- Reflective and structured pedagogical practice focused on learning and inclusion;
- Focused cooperation with parents;
- A robust evaluation culture focused on quality development;
- Clear and professional management at all levels.

These indicators form the core of current ECEC policy development in Denmark and strongly mirror the above international policy levers from the OECD. Again there are tendencies at the policy level to focus on setting high demands and standards for the professionals, who are not just required to implement a programme, but also to meet the challenges of being reflective professionals, who are able to organise and develop quality in the pedagogical practice and work with learning and inclusion. Likewise, professional management is an explicit target in the Danish policy context.

The novelty of these examples of innovative programmes, is a contribution the knowledge on how innovative ECEC in-service professional development programmes may be developed and how it may integrate an innovative implementations strategy. Moreover, the proposed scale-up of RCT studies may provide an evidence-based suggestion of how new policy objectives and challenges on professional development – improvements internationally as well as nationally – can be approached.

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B. England

Introductory snapshot

According to the *Childcare and Early Years Providers Survey*, published in September 2014, almost three quarters of ECEC professionals (72%) are employed in non public sector.

19% of all ECEC settings in the country are public (number refers also to children under compulsory school age who are in schools), and 81% are non public ECEC providers (number includes also home day care provision).

Even though the public sector employs fewer professionals, and operates meaningfully less institutions it provides 43% of all available places for young children (including children in Reception classes where most children are under compulsory school age).

Data concerning attendance rate of the youngest participants of ECEC provision, children 1-2 years old comes from the year 2012 and states that 37% of children attended different types of settings.

The attendance rate of three years olds is on the level of 84% and it is rising with the age of children. 94% of four years olds are attending different types of provision (children usually start Reception class in a school from the September after their 4th birthday). All five years olds attend primary school in either the Reception class or in Year 1.

Information regarding employment of ECEC professionals is not gathered by the institutions providing pre-service training or authorities.

Pre-service professional development:
ECEC educators' qualification requirements, standards and resources

England's overall qualification requirements and standards for early years providers are regulated through the Department of Education's *Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage: Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five*[4] (DfE, 2014). To ensure compliance, Ofsted[5] carries out regular inspections and produces reports that are published at www.ofsted.gov.uk. The framework presents principles that underlie the standards and assessment thereof, and outlines learning and development requirements (Section 1), assessment (Section 2) as well as safeguarding and welfare requirements (Section 3) so that Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) staff and provisions can be nationally managed. Further, the framework explicitly refers to the 2006 Childcare Act, rendering it official legislation.

In terms of ECEC staff qualification requirements, the framework mandates induction training for all staff and that providers are to "support staff to undertake appropriate training and professional development opportunities to ensure they offer quality learning and development experiences for children that continually improves". This includes coaching to help improve on personal effectiveness (DfE, 2014, p. 20).

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[4] Also referred to as the EYFS Statutory Framework or EYFS Framework.

[5] The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, www.ofsted.gov.uk

Managers must hold the minimum qualification as denoted by the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL)[6] (i.e. Early Years Educator qualification), which also requires a general certificate of secondary education (GCSE examination at age 16) with good marks in English and Mathematics. They must also have two years of ECEC working experience. Childminders (family day care workers) must be registered with Ofsted or a childminder agency and are required to complete training in EYFS[7] implementation and are further responsible for their assistants and their competences in ECEC. (Despite this, there are probably many childminders who work informally and thus are not subject to regulation.) There must also be one person on-site (and/or outings) that holds a valid St. John Ambulance or Red Cross paediatric first aid certificate and any ECEC worker who becomes a sole carer of children at any time must also hold such a certificate, renewable every three years. Finally, it is mandated that all ECEC staff be able to communicate, liaise and record-keep effectively in English (DfE, 2014, p. 21).

The framework equally instructs that each child be assigned a "key person" who can help in tailoring individual needs and building relationships with the child and his/her parents. As such, staff: child ratios are strictly mandated and can even be raised by Ofsted, depending on the needs of the ECEC centre. For children up to the age of two years old, the staff: child ratio is 1:3, where at least one staff must hold the minimum qualification denoted earlier (level 3; non-academic vocational training) with at least half the rest of staff holding a similar, but level 2 (rather than level 3) qualification, and all must have undergone training that is specific to the care of babies (DfE, 2014, p. 21-22). For children who are two to three years of age, the staff: child ratio increases to 1:4, with the same qualification requirements for staff. For children aged three or more there are five scenarios (DfE, 2014, p. 22-24):

a. where staff holding a Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), Early Years Professional Status, Early Years Teacher Status or other level 6 (bachelor) qualification and IS working with children:
- the minimum staff:child ratio is 1:13
- at least one other staff must hold a level 3 qualification

b. where staff holding a QTS, Early Years Professional Status, Early Years Teacher Status, other level 6 qualification or overseas trained teacher is NOT working directly with children:
- the minimum staff:child ratio is 1:8
- at least one staff must hold a level 3 qualification
- at least half the rest of staff must hold a level 2 qualification

c. in an independent or private school, where staff holding a QTS, Early Years Professional Status, Early Years Teacher Status or other level 6 qualification and IS working with children:
- in classes where the majority of children will reach five years of age (or more) within the school calendar, the staff:child ratio may be 1:30
- the minimum staff:child ratio is 1:13 for all other classes with younger children
- at least one staff must hold a level 3 qualification

d. in an independent or private school where ECEC workers who do not hold QTS, are not qualified teachers, Early Years Professionals, level 6 qualified or overseas trained:
- the minimum staff:child ratio is 1:8
- at least one staff must hold a level 3 qualification
- at least half the rest of staff must hold a level 2 qualification

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[6] National College for Teaching and Leadership, www.nationalcollege.org.uk

[7] Early Years Foundation Stage, regulated by the EYFS Statutory Framework, 2014 referred to above.

e.   in state nursery schools and nursery classes maintained in primary schools:
- the minimum staff:child ratio is 1:13
- at least one staff must be a school teacher (qualifications are regulated by the Education Act 2002)
- at least one (additional) staff must hold a level 3 qualification

Should classes mix differently aged children groups, they must ensure they comply with the statutory requirements for each age group.

For childminders (home day care), the standards are slightly different. The staff:child ratio cannot exceed 1:6 for children under eight years old and only half can be young children (i.e. up to the age of five), with only one under the age of one. In the case of caring for siblings or childminders' own children, some exceptions to these ratios may be made, but the final decision is Ofsted's. Also, assistants who help childminders can care for the children alone, but for a maximum of two hours per day.

Early Years Teacher Status is awarded to those who undertake Early Years Initial Teacher Training (ITT), certifying that an ECEC worker has met all the standards for practices in care for children in their early years. Training and assessment are designed around the Teachers' Standards (Early Years) (NCTL, 2013) and from September 2014, is awarded through ITT accredited providers only. There are four ways one can earn Early Years Teacher Status:

a.   graduate entry mainstream (full-time), for graduates studying full-time through an academic-based route. Typically this will be over a one-year period that follows the undergraduate degree, with funding available from the National College of Teaching and Leadership (NCTL);

b.   graduate entry employment-based (part-time), for graduates in an early years setting who require training and further experience to demonstrate the Teachers' Standards (Early Years); this is also for graduates who are newly recruited to an early years setting and are undertaking early years ITT through an employment-based route. Training typically takes place over a one-year period, with funding available from the NCTL;

c.   undergraduate entry (full-time), for those who wish to undertake a level 6 (bachelor) degree in an early childhood related subject along with early years teachers status. Typically, this is a full-time three- or four-year route for those entering the profession. Funding is not available from the NCTL for this route. However students from low-income families receive full funding for their fees, and other students can access undergraduate loans at very competitive rates. (Funding for course fees can be accessed through tuition fee loans from Student Finance England)[8];

d.   assessment only, for graduates with experience of working with children under the age of five, who can demonstrate the teaching standards without further training. An example of this is an early year's teacher from overseas. Assessment typically takes place over a period of three months and this is a self-funded route.

In terms of pre-service training, Initial Teacher Training providers design their training programmes so that they meet the needs of their trainees. For trainee teachers, this requires training across the Early Years Foundation Stage (birth to five years old), with a solid understanding of how early education links to education beyond the age of five, in school. Training programmes must provide

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[8] For further information, see www.gov.uk/student-finance

trainees with enough time in early year's settings or schools so as to allow them to demonstrate how they meet the legislated standards. In a scenario where students are full-time, the practical training (in ECEC centre) would consist of:

- 160 days (32 weeks) for a four-year undergraduate programme;
- 120 days (24 weeks) for a three-year undergraduate programme or graduate (university-based) route;
- placements should take place in at least two schools or early year's settings and include at least two weeks in a school in key stage 1.

Policies concerning professional qualification are therefore largely mandated, follow strict accreditation legislation and are assessed regularly by Ofsted so as to ensure compliance. Implementation practices are equally regulated and assessed through the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) so that a common national standard can be upheld.

Currently, there are limited resources available for initial training. One example of where there is funding being invested is through the National College for Teaching and Leadership, for the following two routes (DfE, 2015a):

1. Graduate entry mainstream (full-time):
- a grant of £7,000 for course fees – available to all graduates;
- or for trainees with high academic achievement:
    o a bursary of £9,000 for graduates with a first class (highest honours) degree
- training providers receive the grant funding on behalf of trainees to cover course fees.

2. Graduate entry employment based (part-time):
- a £14,000 incentive from the NCTL is available to employers, although the supply is limited. This covers the training course fees of up to £7,000 and could also contribute to the trainee and other support costs such as salary enhancements;
- training providers receive the funding to cover the course fees, while the remaining funding is then transferred to the early years employer.

Characteristics of in-service professional development for ECEC educators

A summary of the characteristics and evaluation of professional development in the field of ECEC has recently been published by Cathy Nutbrown (2012) in an independent review. The review looked at qualifications and training – both for young people who are new to the early education and childcare sector, and for those already employed there. It also considered how to promote progression through an early years career and into leadership roles. The quality of tuition, the standard of qualifications, as well as recruitment, retention and career progression are the three key areas of concern highlighted in the report.

Despite the legislative features of pre-service qualification and standards in ECEC, the Nutbrown Review (2012, p. 5) reported the following critical assessment in the executive summary:

High quality early education and childcare can have a positive long term impact on children's later learning and achievements, a fact reflected in Government investment over the last two decades in particular. Quality is the key to that positive impact, and staff with the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding are a crucial element of that quality.

There are many examples of excellent practice often led by the small and slowly-growing cadre of graduates. However, some worrying trends have developed too. Some current qualifications lack rigour and depth, and quality is not consistent.

I am concerned that the current early years qualifications system is not systematically equipping (all) practitioners with the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to give babies and young children high quality experiences.

A new long-term vision is needed for the early years workforce, with a reformed system of qualifications to help achieve this. In working towards this vision, a balance must be struck between supporting existing good practice and challenging the sector to ensure provision is high quality in all settings.

This is a challenge for Government and for everyone working in and leading provision for young children. For me, the role of Government is to ensure the necessary standards are being met, but the sector must play a role in determining how these can be achieved as it strives for excellence. The sector is becoming more professional, and Government must support this diverse sector to make its own improvement. In all my recommendations I have specified high and achievable standards, and how Government might apply these. I have also aimed to allow flexibility in how the sector may work towards them.

The Nutbrown Review pointed out deficiencies in the skills of early years practitioners. She recommended an overhaul of initial teacher training but also innovative means of in-service education to lift the standards in practice in the workforce.

To note, there are also many professional associations that have a training function as well as an 'employee rights' function for ECEC staff. These have low fees and almost all practitioners belong to one of them, either as individuals or through their centres. They hold workshops, meetings and increasingly offer on-line courses or 'webinars'. See for example, the websites for Early Education https://www.early-education.org.uk/, and the National Day Nursery Association http://www.ndna.org.uk/, which are particular sources for informal and non-formal ongoing professional development

ECEC educators' role, responsibility and quality concepts

Teachers and other Early Years Workers have to make sure that the seven areas of learning and development of the child (specified in the Early Childhood Foundation Stage) must shape educational programmes in early years settings. These are divided between prime and specific areas of learning (GOV.UK, 2014):

The prime areas of learning are:
- communication and language
- physical development
- personal, social and emotional development

The specific areas of learning are:
- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding the world
- expressive arts and design

Practitioners must consider the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care, and must use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child

in all of the areas of learning and development. In planning and guiding children's activities, practitioners must reflect on the different ways that children learn and implement these in their practice. The EYFS specifies that well-qualified, skilled staff strongly increases the potential of any individual setting to deliver the best possible outcomes for children and the requirements in relation to staff qualifications are outlined in "Section 3 – The safeguarding and welfare requirements" of the EYFS Statutory Framework (DfE, 2014, p. 16-32).

As mentioned earlier, Ofsted inspects the quality of the delivery of the EYFS in all settings and how well providers are meeting the welfare, learning and development requirements. It also inspects the training institutions, and therefore regulates both the quality of training and the quality of the centres. It inspects training courses and has a unique inspection framework for this, see: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofsted-to-inspect-early-years-initial-teacher-training.

In pre-service education, the aim is to equip the trainee to implement the EYFS in such a way that will enable children to achieve their early learning goals. The quality and provision of experience for each child should lead to the seven areas of learning and development. But quality must be inferred from the documents – the seven curriculum areas are at the forefront (DfE, 2015a; Ofsted, 2014, 2015).

In conclusion, quality assessment in the UK is firstly mandated, is managed both independently and in collaboration with a variety of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders and is addressed in pre-service and in-service education and training. There are clear frameworks designed to address child development that are deployed nationally, so as to strive towards unified quality standards and learning experiences for all of the UK's children.

Although the system of pre-service training is highly regulated and funded, professional in-service training is variable and receives less support from the central government.

Policy developments and reforms

New ECEC legislation is currently under development, especially the concept of 'democracy'. In 2013 there was a government proposal to increase ratios but this met with so much resistance from the professionals – it was successfully resisted by the sector and there has been no change in statutory requirements.

The government is being urged to set targets for qualification levels (many support the position that everyone in childcare should hold a level 3 education), and consultations are underway, although there is yet to be mandatory legislation in that direction. One example of a recommendation put forth to this aim comes from the Nutbrown Review (2012, p. 34):

> Recommendation 7
> The EYFS requirements should be revised so that, from September 2015, a minimum of 70 per cent of staff in group settings need to possess at least a 'full and relevant' level 3 to count in the staff:child ratios.

As a result of such ongoing debates and proposals, the UK is facing greater professionalism in ECEC. The system follows a well developed statutory framework and regular quality checks, through Ofsted for instance, and therefore, future policy developments and reforms will emanate from both independent and systematic review processes to guide change.

Quality assurance regulation, monitoring and evaluation

Ofsted is the UK's ECEC's most important monitoring and evaluation body. It is independent of government although it reports directly to Parliament, working closely with the Department for Education and other ministerial departments in conducting its regulatory and inspection functions.

The regulatory inspection includes information about:

- a provider's performance in terms of pass/fail of its trainees;
- a provider's quality and standards;
- the efficiency and effectiveness of the education and training provided;
- and an evaluation of how it meets trainees' needs.

The inspectors look at the type of provision and different subject areas, and use a framework to guide them through the inspection. The *Common Inspection Framework for further education and skills – For use from September 2012* (Ofsted, 2014) sets out the characteristics of the grades and lists questions that inspectors must ask of every provider of education, training and development. It forms the second half of the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills – For use from September 2012* (Ofsted, 2015). Inspectors will observe lessons and training, look at good practice, and offer feedback to providers, making judgments on a scale of 1 (outstanding) to 4 (requires improvement).

Assessment of quality in teaching, learning and assessment (Ofsted, 2014, p. 6-7) refers to the following areas:

- the extent to which learners benefit from high expectations, engagement, care, support and motivation from staff;
- staff's use of their skills and expertise to plan and deliver teaching, learning and support to meet each learner's needs;
- staff's initial assessment of learners' starting points, monitoring of their progress, setting of challenging tasks, and building on and extending learning for all learners;
- learners' understanding of how to improve as a result of frequent, detailed and accurate feedback from staff, following assessments of their learning;
- teaching and learning that contribute to the development of English, mathematics and functional skills, and support in the achievement of learning goals and career aims;
- appropriate and timely information, advice and guidance in the support of learning effectively;
- equality and diversity as being promoted through teaching and learning.

Beyond inspecting childcare and children's social care, Ofsted also inspects initial teacher education institutions, (some) work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, education. Additionally, Ofsted assesses children's services in local areas, and inspects services for safeguarding and child protection.

As a result, incremental improvements or reforms to the ECEC system occur either through or in cooperation with Ofsted. Their evaluation reports are made available to the public through their website and they also produce an array of publications and policy documents that address various ECEC stakeholders.

Highlights of innovative approaches

Innovative approaches in in-service professional development lift the work of the ECEC staff member from 'just' baby-sitting to being a responsive guide in children's development, including their learning and participation in the social life of the centre. Higher standards of education and training can professionalise the workforce, leading to better recruitment and retention. The innovative examples below include organisation of services at local level, qualifications, and funding.

Some of the most interesting innovations in the ECEC workforce in the UK are related to programmes that link research with early years practice. The first two examples below are innovative as they connect research with practice through training on the use of research-based observational scales for assessing quality.

Professional development

(i) A+ Education Ltd.[9] is one of several organisations that provide training on Environment Rating Scales[10] in the UK. It aims to improve professionals' knowledge on early year learners (0-5 years) and support their development through curriculum and pedagogy. The training group works with schools and local governments to improve the work in ECEC settings through the use of five observational scales that are designed to evaluate different early years contexts. A+ Education's scales align closely with the national curriculum and are recognised by the regulatory body Ofsted.

(ii) Centre for Research in Early Childhood[11] is a centre specialising in research and professional development in early childhood. It trains teachers on the Leuven Observational Scales of Child Involvement and also offers undergraduate and postgraduate research degrees. Like A+ above, the CREC provides research-based in-service training.

(iii) A further innovation was the Graduate Leader Fund (2005-2009). This multi-million pound initiative gave grants to private and charitable centres to upskill their staff to include those with graduate qualifications. The fund was intended to allow centres to appoint teachers with degree qualifications, or to send their own staff for training so that they would up-skill to graduate level.

(iv) The national programme for Children's Centres provides experiences that enhance the professional skills of staff. Education, care, health, adult education and employment services are brought together into a single centre through the Sure Start Children's Centres programme. There are more than 2,500 children's centres located mainly in poor areas to support families and children with low education and health problems (GOV.UK, 2013). These centres bring together staff from different professions and serve to professionalise the workforce through multi-professional work in a single centre. In these multi-professional centres ECEC staff up-skill through daily work with those from cognate disciplines such as health.

Qualifications

In 2013/14 two new qualifications were created by the Department for Education: Early Years Worker (two years post compulsory schooling) and Early Years Teacher (degree). Both had new (and higher) requirements for entry, training curricula, and means of assessing theoretical and practical knowledge.

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[9] For further information, see www.aplus-education.co.uk

[10] ECERS and ITERS among others.

[11] For further information, see www.crec.co.uk

All funded settings in the private and voluntary sector must employ at least one Early Years worker and settings located in primary schools must employ at least one Early Years Teacher.

A major problem with the new 'Early Years Teacher' status is that it does not bring with it the 'Qualified teacher status' reserved for teachers in primary and secondary school. Although formerly ECEC teachers with degrees were trained alongside primary teachers and received the same pay, the new ECEC teachers do not have to be trained in the same universities nor receive the same pay as primary school teachers. This may impact on the need to recruit talented young people into the profession. (The old system of training alongside primary teachers continues, however, and many university courses will continue to train ECEC teachers alongside primary teachers. However, teachers trained in the old way will demand higher salaries than the new ECEC Teachers and so may have difficulty finding employers willing to pay.)

Funding for professional development of employed staff

From 2014 ECEC settings receive £300 for each child in their care whose parents fall in the lowest 20% of income. This can be used in centres in poor neighbourhoods for additional training for staff. Although the 'poverty premium' does not require in-service up-skilling of staff, many settings are using it for this purpose

A long-term vision

Nevertheless, a long-term vision is needed for the early years workforce, including some system reforms. The new qualification framework and the cited programmes and research on early years quality are strengthening professional development in ECEC. As mentioned earlier, there's a particular focus on the quality of teaching, standard of workforce qualifications and recruitment, retention and career progression. But we still struggle with wages lower than in schools and a low status workforce. The Nutbrown Review (2012) called for attention to:

- the crucial role of tutors in training courses on early years;
- the strong link between colleges and practice placements, considered as "an essential part of training for tutors with a higher qualification" (Nutbrown, 2012, p. 7);
- the crucial role of mentors as supporters in continuing professional development: "All new practitioners should have professional support in their first six months of employment, in the form of mentoring" (Nutbrown, 2012, p. 7). Although this was a recommendation to Government, it has not yet been funded.

Working against realising such a positive long-term vision are constraints on funding due to the world recession. Importantly, the early years sector is not funded as well as the school sector and will not improve in fundamental ways until higher salaries can be paid to attract and retain talented practitioners. That said, much progress has been made since 1997. In 2003 the proportion of staff in ECEC with a two-year training was 57% but this rose to 84% in 2011.

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C. Finland

Introductory snapshot

(Sources: Lasten Päivähoito, 2014; University of Tampere, 2014)

In Finland there are public and non-public (private) settings providing Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) for children, up to the age of six. ECEC settings are comprised of about 85% public and 15% private institutions (private day care centres or family day care). Legal regulation concerning adult-to-child ratios applies to both public and private sectors (1:4 with children under three years of age and 1:7 for children over three years of age). The attendance rate of children in private day care settings is on the level of 8% of all the children attending day care in Finland, and as a result, the large majority of ECEC educators work in public units.

The attendance rate for children up to the age of two is on the level of 40% in both public and private sectors. That is 20% less than the coverage rate for children aged three to five years (about 60%). The total number of children up to the age of six attending ECEC is on the level of 62%. This high level reflects the coverage rate of six-year-old children participating in one year of pre-primary education (98%). The year before the children start primary education, children have a statutory right to attend pre-primary education (up to 700 hours), provided free of charge (after year 2014 pre-primary education will be binding for both municipalities and children's guardians). Of the pre-primary classrooms 79% are situated in day care centres, and 21% in primary schools.

All universities in Finland track the professional careers of graduates of ECEC studies, but general conclusions can be made only very cautiously because of low response rates. Two small samples from the universities of Tampere and Jyväskylä were used as the basis for this report as national, centralised reports are not available.

Pre-service professional development: ECEC educators' qualification requirements, standards and resources

Finland's qualification requirements in ECEC differ between day care educators, pre-primary (kindergarten) teachers and primary school teachers. A series of national laws from 1973 mandates that day care staff members (working with children between the ages of one and six) must hold at least a secondary degree in the social welfare and health care fields. Additionally, one in every three day care educators in each day care centre must be a kindergarten teacher who has a bachelor's degree in education, a master's in education at an university or a bachelor's in social sciences at an university of applied sciences. Other staff, for instance nurses, must have at least a vocational upper-secondary qualification in the field of social welfare and health care.

Pre-primary teachers, who teach six-year-olds, must hold either a bachelor's or master's degree in education, or a bachelor's degree in social sciences supplemented by an extra pedagogical course (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2004, p. 14). Primary school teachers, who must hold a master's degree in education[12], are also eligible to teach pre-primary classes, as stated in the Teaching Qualifications Decree 986/1998.

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[12] The degree is 300 credits, and it includes multi-disciplinary studies in subjects and cross-curricular themes taught in basic education (a minimum of 60 credits) as well as Teacher's Pedagogical Studies with relevant teaching practices (a minimum of 60 credits). Studies in the class teacher programme at the University of Jyväskylä, for example, are structured around five

Kindergarten teacher education (BA) is nationally regulated. At the University of Jyväskylä, to take an example, the programme is divided into four parts, designed to support the development of young teachers' professional identities:

1. Major subject studies
- Basic Studies in Early Childhood Education (25 credits)
- Intermediate Studies in Early Childhood Education, including Methodological Studies and Bachelor's Thesis (35 credits)

2. Minor subject studies
- Professional Skill Studies, including Assessment and Curriculum (60 credits)
- Other minor subject studies (25 credits)

3. Supervised teaching practice (15 credits)

4. Language, communication and orientation studies (20 credits)

This BA makes one eligible to study toward a two-year (120 credits) masters in education – a path which is becoming more and more common.

Education of kindergarten teachers in the Department of Education at the University of Jyväskylä is guided by the following five principles:

1. Support for growth towards developing one's personal pedagogical philosophy (self-reflection, identity formation, a critically evaluative stance, awareness of ethical values);
2. Dialogical interaction (open conversation, shared expertise, equality in a community of learners);
3. Integration of research and practical applications for understanding of one's own modes of accomplishment;
4. Personal responsibility for one's learning (agency, self-awareness and understanding, autonomous thinking, self-confidence and self-respect);
5. Support for societal awareness and collaboration with internal and external networks (regular contact and cooperation with working life networks).

The goal is that students grow into autonomous, self-reflective, and ethically responsible professionals with a strong research foundation and preparedness to meet the challenges of a constantly changing profession, the evolving needs of the schooling, and lifelong learning. This is achieved by creating a dialogical learning environment, in which students and teachers collaborate in courses and research projects.

Critical reflection plays a central role in Finnish ECEC pre-service training, in particular in supervised practice periods in day care centres and schools. Student teachers are required to determine specific goals for themselves for their practice periods and their achievement is evaluated individually and together with supervising teachers. Furthermore, student teachers design and plan pedagogical activities in ECEC learner groups. These plans are critically reflected upon afterwards and feedback is

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phenomena: (1) Interaction and cooperation, (2) Learning and guidance, (3) Education, society and change, (4) Scientific thinking and knowledge, and (5) Competence and expertise. The degree also includes language and communication studies and other elective minor subjects offered by the Faculty of Education or other faculties. One of the most popular minor studies programmes in the Department of Teacher Education is an Early School Years programme, which focuses on pre-primary education and the first two years of primary school (child development, learning of basic academic skills, curriculum work, child-centred pedagogy, and professional and teacher-parent collaboration). Normaalikoulu [University Teacher Training school] is a comprehensive school beside the university that works with education programmes at every Finnish university to bolster pedagogical research and development efforts.

provided by supervising teachers at the ECEC settings and the supervising university teachers.

In summary, Finnish day care educators must hold at least secondary degrees and kindergarten teachers must have bachelor's degrees or higher. Primary school teachers (who may also teach in pre-primary classrooms) must hold master's degree in education. These requirements are nationally regulated.

Characteristics of in-service professional development for ECEC educators

ECEC educators are obliged to participate in in-service trainings each year (Children's Day Care Act, 1973). Depending on the professional tasks of the ECEC educators, in-service training should comprise between three and ten days per year (Social Welfare Act 50/2005). There is no unified national system for professional development, but several short trainings are currently being arranged at the national level. In-service trainings designed by national bodies are free and organised by, for example, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Finnish National Board of Education, professional organisations such as the Association of Kindergarten Teachers in Finland[13], and research institutes such as the Niilo Mäki Institute[14] which specialises in learning difficulties. Private associations and university continuing education centres also organise courses, which are generally subject to a fee. Also, municipalities provide local in-service training according to their resources. Programmes thus, vary widely across the nation. Individual professional development courses often touch upon themes such as supporting immigrant children as part of the ECEC groups or supporting children with problems in language development or other learning difficulties. Specific courses focusing specifically on socially disadvantaged children and their families are, however, very rare. Children from these families have full access to ECEC, but social disadvantage is a sensitive matter and it is seldom directly addressed in professional courses.

The city of Jyväskylä is an example of an active area that sponsors series of trainings and guest lecturers for ECEC educators. Jyväskylä's recent programmes have included expert lectures on children's emotional wellbeing and self-esteem, educational partnerships, pedagogical leadership, and learning and motivation, among other topics. These in-service trainings are intended to enable continuous reflective process between professionals in individual ECEC settings and to complement the city's teacher mentoring system.

The University of Jyväskylä provides training for pre-primary teachers who act as supervisors for student teachers. Kindergarten teachers working in day care centres, for example, can attend three meetings with university staff during every supervised teaching period – at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end. In her dissertation, entitled, *"The nature of meaningful student-mentor relationships in pre-school teacher education"*, Tarja Liinamaa (2014) examined the relationship between students and mentors during students' preschool practicum periods. Three results emerged as being crucial to creating a meaningful student-mentor relationship. Firstly, the mentoring relationship can be understood a as process which is highly important at the beginning, but is nevertheless also in continuous development throughout the mentoring period, through interactions and in pedagogical activities. Secondly, the study highlights that the quality of interactions is important. Thirdly, the social, physical and pedagogical environments of a day care and its community are highly relevant for the students and mentors representing that community need to induct new practitioners into it. Such

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[13] LTOL in Finland. For more information, see www.lastentarha.fi/cs/ltol/public_en

[14] For more information, see www.nmi.fi/en/front-page

studies underscore the continuous reflective process and professional development taking place in daily practice.

In addition, some day care centres and pre-primary classrooms take part in research projects and professional intervention programmes. On a smaller scale, individual schools and day care centres organise special evenings for their staff to provide targeted professional support. ECEC centres cooperate closely and establish their own networks, particularly if they are located in proximity to one another. At the national and regional levels there are associations which bring professionals together. Trade unions (e.g. The Association of Kindergarten Teachers in Finland [*Lastentarhanopettajaliitto*]) and its local branches (e.g. Central Finland Kindergarten Teachers' Association [*Keski-Suomen lastentarhanopettajat*]), on the other hand, focus both on administrative issues and pedagogical or practice-oriented perspectives.

The recent economic recession in Europe has threatens to cut back resources for professional development. As the finalizing stage of preparation of the new ECEC law in Finland comes to pass during a time of resource cutbacks, care should be taken to prevent drastic diminishing of in-service training opportunities.

ECEC educators' role, responsibility and quality concepts

Finland's national ECEC Curriculum Guidelines from the year 2003, identify professional development and professional awareness as the key in fostering competence in teachers. Specifically, educators are to "[…] be committed, sensitive and able to react to a child's feelings and needs […] the view that care, education and teaching form an integrated whole acts as a guiding principle for educators, who are also aware of the child's potential growth and learning [...]" (National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland, 2003, p. 16). The National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health has played a central role in the application of the ECEC curriculum by providing mentoring, training and support materials[15].

The Core Curriculum for Pre-Primary Education in Finland (National Board of Education, 2010) and the Core Curriculum for Basic Education in Finland (National Board of Education, 2004) state that educators and teachers have a central role in supporting learning according to children's personal needs and interests, as well as observing possible areas of development and learning that require interventions:

> Working in cooperation with staff participating in the implementation of pre-primary education, guardians and children, the teacher will plan, implement and assess activities, which lead to the development of children's emotions, skills and knowledge and expand the interests of individual children and, as a result, of the whole group (National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education in Finland, 2010, p. 9).

Finland does not have a nationally organised assessment system concerning ECEC quality or explicitly stated criteria for it. However, objectives and examples of high-quality pre-primary education are found in the official guidelines, such as in the National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education in Finland (National Board of Education, 2010) and are passed on to teachers through trainings and university education. In kindergarten teacher BA programmes, curriculum constitutes a fundamental part of the studies, and during their courses and practice periods students learn how to plan, develop and evaluate the ECEC curriculum. The National Curriculum Guidelines on Early

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[15] For more information, see www.STAKES.fi/varttua/ajankohtaista/vasu

Childhood Education and Care in Finland (2003) and National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education in Finland (2010) generate a shared description of the core of high quality ECEC, which is passed on to kindergarten teachers in pre-service training.

The educators' role in ECEC continues to be of interest to academic research. Two examples of such studies come from the University of Jyväskylä's Department of Education, discipline (formerly known as unit) of Early Childhood Education. In her Ph.D. thesis, *"Day care work and leadership in a distributed organisation"* Leena Halttunen (2009) examined professional relationships, leadership and leaders' expectations in day care settings. Her study demonstrated that national and local guidelines had a greater impact on everyday work than the organisational structure (e.g. units forming a distributed organisation[16], and that "immediate working communities" have an important influence role on professional relationships and leadership. In her PhD thesis, *"Me, an expert?"*, Päivi Kupila (2007) explored meaning perspectives in relation to educational expertise. The results indicated that social and collegial reflection are vital parts of the process of transforming educators into experts, and that changes in meaning perspective occur at the individual, community and societal levels. The research identified four distinct identities of ECEC educators – the consolidated pedagogue, the identity seeker, the community actor and the specialist. Kupila's findings emphasise that support for the development of expert identities of ECEC educators must ensue throughout the educational process; a conclusion which also informs practice and policies related to ECEC educators' role, responsibility and quality.

Policy developments and reforms

Day care and ECEC responsibilities were transferred from the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs to the Ministry of Culture and Education in the beginning of the year 2013 after a 40-year history of governance and administration of ECEC as a social service. Today, ECEC falls under the lifelong learning and education areas of government. This reform has triggered a review of ECEC steering documents, namely, the National Curriculum Guidelines on ECEC in Finland (2003) and the National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education (2010) and has prompted changes in practice. As an example, starting from August, 2015 pre-primary education concerning all six-year-olds will become binding for municipalities and guardians.

In the upcoming ECEC legislation (under development since 2012) the following three areas are of particular concern:

1. Personnel structure: ensuring a sufficient proportion of staff members with pedagogical training;
2. Staff qualifications: there is a strong consensus towards the heads of ECEC settings having a master's degree, as well as maintaining (rather than lowering) the qualification requirements for ECEC educators;
3. The new national guidelines for pre-primary and basic education curricula were given out December, 2014 and they will take effect by August, 2016. New local curricula are being prepared, and they will also take effect in August, 2016.

One other important change came into effect at the beginning of year 2015, when ECEC educators became eligible to receive state-funded in-service training alongside other teacher groups, as per the Ministry of Education and Culture. This initiative fosters a closer professional exchange and collaboration between teacher groups (e.g. primary school teachers and kindergarten teachers).

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[16] In this dissertation, "distributed organisation" refers to an organisation comprised of two or more day care units that are led by a single day care director (Halttunen, 2009, p. 4).

Quality assurance regulation, monitoring and evaluation

At the moment, quality assurance of ECEC is not nationally guided or monitored in Finland. Municipalities decide for themselves how to assess quality and ECEC educator skills. Individual ECEC settings may also assess quality and collect feedback through such means as parental surveys. As an example, Local Government Employers[17] has been collecting information on attendance rates for in-service training; however, the information is not profession-specific and indicates attendance rates among all professional groups within a municipal sector, i.e. not just for ECEC educators or teachers.

A municipal example of quality assurance regulation, monitoring and evaluation is presented below for the city of Jyväskylä (2014). In the documents of the City of Jyväskylä, staff is mentioned as the "key element in maintaining high quality ECEC. The goal is to establish working communities which are competent and open to changes and where individual work is made transparent for different collaborators and subjected for evaluation". Parents, children, collaborators and staff are involved in the regular quality evaluation processes through various evaluation methods. Parental satisfaction, for instance, is evaluated twice per year through electronic surveys and parental panels are regularly invited to discuss quality issues. The evaluation procedure commits teachers to reflect on their work and own practices from several perspectives. Surveys are also conducted with ECEC personnel who provide feedback on "working motivation, fluency of the work, and matters concerning developing one's own work, twice a year". Throughout the municipality:

> Each year, every ECEC unit formulates quality goals from three different perspectives: 1) improving the quality of services, 2) improving child's wellbeing, and 3) improving the wellbeing of the work communities. ECEC units also decide upon the suitable evaluation methods which measure achieving these goals. Parents are being informed regularly on the results of these evaluations.

> Close collaboration with the local educational institutions has been established concerning research collaboration, educational collaboration, and collaboration on teacher training. Collaboration is based on mutual sharing of knowledge and know-how (Jyväskylä, 2014, p. 23).

Complementing local and ECEC unit initiatives, there have been some large-scale professional development evaluations. The most recent nationwide survey carried out in 2013 looked at several aspects of pre-service education (Karila et al., 2013). It aimed at collecting data on the state of early childhood education, and on the strengths and challenges of different training programmes in relation to the evolving demands in skills and on the functioning of the educational system in early childhood education. The evaluation included academic degree qualifications and diplomas (n = 9) that cover most under school-age early childhood education degree programmes in child care, education, teaching and management. The evaluation group formulated recommendations for each educational sector to further develop education in universities, in universities of applied sciences and in vocational institutions. The evaluation group formulated the following recommendations for all the sectors under review:

- In all reforms of curricula for education and training in early childhood education, the development of contents relating to changes in society and culture, childhood and changes in

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[17] Kuntatyönantajat (KT) in Finland.

it, child development and learning, early childhood education pedagogy and the operation of childhood education settings should be better taken into account.

- Education providers should make their documented curricula easier to understand and more transparent. The curricula should clearly display the degree programme's pedagogical processes, key content, objectives for professional competencies and assessment criteria for learning and competencies. The knowledge base must be up-to-date and all information on literature and other material used in the studies must be supplied in advance.

- Providers of education and training in ECEC should forge closer collaboration at the national level when formulating and developing core curricula. Key issues to be evaluated and examined in collaboration are the objectives and content of the degree programmes, qualifications, and descriptions of the professional competencies in early childhood education included in the curricula.

- A new forum of collaboration for those who provide training in early childhood education should be established where the latest research into early childhood education can be explored together on an annual basis.

- When renewing the student selection processes, it is important to ensure that a reliable system is created for evaluating whether potential candidates are suited to study the discipline.

- Cooperation between training in early childhood education and working life should be further strengthened. In connection with the legislative reform of early childhood education it is necessary to clarify what sort of competencies the tasks in early childhood education require from the staff and what are the best means for providing these competencies in the occupational structures and educational systems.

- Student intake numbers in early childhood education should be examined as one entity and the relations between study placements for the different degree programmes should be evaluated from the viewpoint of a national perspective using an approach of foresight.

- A national cooperation organ for training in early childhood education should be appointed in Finland for given fixed periods at a time, whose mandate would be to monitor developments in training in early childhood education.

- Providers of early childhood education services and education providers should work in closer collaboration in organising continuing education in such a way that basic training and continuing education form a coherent continuum.

- Each educational level and degree programme should have clear and flexible channels for acquiring the qualifications required in the field after an adequate basic diploma or degree has been acquired.

- Follow-up evaluation of education and training in early childhood education should be carried out in five years' time. The evaluation should focus especially on how the content has evolved and how well the educational structure operates.

Three examples of doctoral theses focusing on pre-primary and ECEC educators' and teachers' professional development, provide findings that helps to inform future practices in ECEC.

Mervi Hangasmaa's (2014) dissertation from the University of Jyväskylä provided new information about how individual learning plans are constructed from the early childhood level through to the primary school level. The study found that children were seen both as active individuals with skills and as children to be guided and protected. Teachers had varying roles throughout the individual learning plan construction process ranging from educators and instructors to experts. Cooperation was also a key part of the process, between participants from homes, schools and nursery schools, with parents benefitting from their chances to have an active two-way involvement. The research is significant in terms of evaluation because it underscores the importance of actors in learning plans for ECEC learners.

In her doctoral dissertation Sirpa Eskelä-Haapanen (2012; University of Tampere), developed a model in which each individual learner will have access to appropriate support in a classroom in pre-primary and early school years. Of particular relevance was special needs educator's understanding and knowledge of inclusive classroom pedagogy, and means of supporting child's learning within the zone of proximal development. In the proposed model the ECEC educator acts as a multiprofessional co-teacher with the special needs educator. Co-operation between home and school was also important for implementing the targeted support model. Therefore, the study offered a practical tool that can help tailor classroom teaching and bolster ECEC educators' professional growth.

Thirdly, in her dissertation, *"The teacher as a researcher looking for the essence of evaluation. A narrative on developing growth-oriented pupil assessment as an individual and collaborative process"*, Elina Törmä (2011) utilised action research to describe personal growth as a teacher researcher in implementing and developing growth-oriented pupil assessment. Including parents in evaluation discussions and in the research in pre-primary and early school years, had an enriching impact on constructing pupil, educator and parent identities.

Highlights of innovative approaches

The strength of Finnish ECEC resides in the high level of competence of the ECEC educators. The following highlights of innovative approaches emphasise the development of these competences in terms of mentoring projects and educational leadership courses in ECEC.

The first example is a project[18] (2008-2010) which is new in terms of professional development in Finland. Within the project, professionals in ECEC were trained to work as peer mentors in the field of ECEC. The core concepts of the project involved mentoring which centred on professional roles and professional identities and multi-professional collaboration as well as support during the initial career phase in ECEC. This was a collaborative project between the universities of Jyväskylä and Tampere, which was carried out in the cities of Jyväskylä and Tampere, producing the final report of "*Early childhood education work identity formation in the meetings of professional generations and professional groups*" (Reference same as the footnote).

The second example of innovative approach is from the University of Jyväskylä, where the Institute of Educational Leadership[19] provides in-service training courses on educational leadership in ECEC. The objective is to deepen and broaden knowledge on the extensive nature of leadership in the context of ECEC.

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[18] For more information, see Varhaiskasvatuksen työidentiteettien muotoutuminen eri ammattilaissukupolvien ja ammattiryhmien kohtaamisessa (2010), Työsuojelurahasto; project 108267, Tampereen yliopisto, Opettajankoulutuslaitos, Varhaiskasvatuksen yksikkö, at www.tsr.fi/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=13109&name=DLFE-4301.pdf

[19] For more information, see Educational leadership in ECEC (3-5 credits), University of Jyväskylä, the Institute of Educational Leadership (in Finnish), at www.jyu.fi/edu/laitokset/rehtori/koulutus/varhaiskasvatuksen-johtamiskoulutus-1

Three additional examples are noteworthy in terms of creating impact through change: (1) kindergarten teacher education at the University of Jyväskylä; (2) an ongoing intervention study about preventing classroom disengagement at the University of Jyväskylä; and, (3) the playful learning project at the University of Helsinki.

First, at the University of Jyväskylä training organisers are re-examining the organisation of in-service programmes together with the city service providers. Between 2013 and 2015, the municipality of Jyväskylä has taken a two-pronged approach to kindergarten teacher education. The first part contains an in-service programme including the city, the care settings and the individual staff members which features guest lectures on, municipal curricula and diverse topics such as the learning environment and children's emotional wellbeing and self-esteem.,. The second part of the programme involves bringing university faculty to provide special training for those teachers who are supervising student teachers. Those supervising teachers are invited to meet with university staff three times during their practicum.

The second example of an innovative approach is an ongoing intervention at the University of Jyväskylä on promoting classroom dialogue and student engagement in the pre-primary, primary and secondary school classrooms, *Preventing disengagement in classroom context: Classroom processes fostering student engagement (Skidi-Kids; VarVu & Vuomo*, 2013-2015[20]). The participating teachers meet regularly in workshops where mentor familiarise them with the CLASS observation tool, and the framework of classroom quality. Learning interactions and classroom dialogue are videotaped in the participants groups ECEC settings, and the recordings are then discussed in workshops, promoting self-reflection through utilising the dialogue and other concepts.

Third, the Playful Learning Center Project[21] at the University of Helsinki is an example of ongoing research regarding both pre-service and in-service training. Since 2013, the centre has functioned as a living lab, hosting researchers, educators, teacher education professionals and business representatives. It also serves as the setting for both basic and applied interdisciplinary research projects, and offers education and training for teachers at all levels. The trainings take place pre- and in-service, and are geared toward all educators in different cultural institutions and companies within the learning services field. The latest research on playful learning informs these trainings.

There are commonalities linking the above three examples. For instance, each project conceptualises professional development as an interactive and reflective process between the municipality administrators, the ECEC setting, educators and teachers. They also involve links between professional development and research, e.g. the use of research tools to promote professional growth through reflexivity, awareness and self-reflection. The projects bring together researchers, educators, teacher educators, businesses and other stakeholders to create interdisciplinary perspectives on in-service and pre-service professional development.

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[20] For more information and project details, see www.jyu.fi/edu/laitokset/okl/hankkeet/vuorovaikutusprosessit-ja-osallisuuden-tukeminen

[21] For more information, see the Playful Learning Centre at www.plchelsinki.fi

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D. Germany

Introductory snapshot
(Sources: Statistisches Bundesamt, 2014)

The ECEC sector is shared by state, so called "free providers" and very few private providers. In terms of the number of ECEC institutions, number of professionals working with children on a daily basis, and the number of places for children there is predominance in the sector of free non-governmental providers (e.g. churches). But these providers are also subsidised by the state to carry out the tasks. The proportion of ECEC institutions for children under the age of three is about 1:4 and for children aged three to eight, the proportion is closer to 1:2 (with more private settings in both cases). Regarding the number of ECEC staff working with children up to the age of three on a daily basis, the proportion is approximately 1:2, 5 and for professionals working with children between the ages of three and eight, the count is at about 1:2. The non-governmental, free sector provides almost three times more places for young children up to the age of three and almost twice more places for older children.

The attendance rate in institutional and home-based settings (public, free and private providers) increases with the age of children. There is a significant growth of attendance rates for children over one year of age. The majority of children benefit from some form of institutional ECEC provision. Concerning children up to the ages of three, the proportion is at about 1:5, and for groups of children aged three to six years old, the rate is out of proportion at 1:200.

Child-staff ratios differ strongly between the federal states of Germany. In 2013, the national average was 4.6 children per caregiver in groups of children under the age of three (Bock Famulla & Lange, 2013). Furthermore, there are big differences between eastern and western Germany, with eastern Germany having less favourable child-staff ratios than western Germany. For instance, in the state of Bremen one caregiver is responsible for 3.1 children whereas in Saxony-Anhalt, the number of children per caregiver is 6.4 (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2013) for children under the age of three. These regional differences also exist in groups of children over three years of age, the national average being 9.6 children per ECEC staff. Overall the number of children per ECEC staff is higher than recommended from a pedagogical point of view. Recommendations often are from one up to three children per caregiver for groups of children under three years of age and 7.5 children per caregiver for groups of children over three years.

Pre-service professional development:
ECEC educators' qualification requirements,
standards and resources

Although all German[22] day care facilities are obliged to follow state and federal guidelines, they fall under the direct purview of municipalities. An example is competence profiles for ECEC staff - there is none at the national level, so private providers or local offices set outlines which may be distinct. As in many other European countries, this results in variation between municipalities in different states and also within the same state. To illustrate, here in one example from North Rhine Westphalia (NRW):

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[22] See general description of German framework as outlined in WP2's D2.1 "Overview of European ECEC Curricula and Curriculum Template".

> In 2005, the Tagesbetreuungsausbaugesetz (Childcare Development Act - TAG) was passed which introduced minimal qualification standards for the childminders at day care institutions. [...] Like in many other EU countries, different educational requirements exist for the different types of ECEC staff. On the whole however, the minimal level of educational requirements is the competence of the individual federal states (Bundesländer). The NRW Kinderbildungsgesetz (Child Education Act – Kibiz) of 2008 further provides a legal framework in NRW about the required staff competences and stipulates that staff working in day-care facilities should have at least a completed vocational training (Fachschulabschluss). [...] The use of support staff in day-care is limited by law to consist at most of half of the staff. Support staff does not require the specialised knowledge and/or qualifications that the preschool teachers (educators / Erzieherinnen) require. It does however allow individuals in such a support staff position to develop one's competences through continuing professional development programme and later obtain the required qualification based on prior experiences. Generally however, these legal guidelines only serve as guidelines for the municipalities that directly govern the day-care facilities. The KiBiz law does also include provisions on the management of day-care facilities; these should have the standard required educational level in addition to sufficient working experience. [...] Nationally, no competence profiles exist for ECEC staff; it is primarily left to the local Youth offices or the private provider to set more specific profiles for day-care staff. As a result, some variation exists between municipalities throughout NRW. Municipalities control the HR policies of the municipal day-care facilities, and these decide about the staffing of day-care facilities within the legal limits as set out above. No staff requirements are set for the more informal type of childminding, of family day-care. The only requirement is that the childminders enroll in courses of approximately 160 hours, before they start running their 'family day-care' (Lindeboom & Buiskool, 2013).

In Germany, there are three different pathways for ECEC professionals who aim to work with children younger than six. The first is a child care worker (Kinderpfleger), for which a candidate must have completed upper secondary school. However the trainings for child care workers are only offered in a limited number of federal states. The second option is to be an educator. Educators are qualified in state vocational programmes that vary between two and three years in length and end with a state examination. Some areas require a further year of practical training and others include practical experience the core programme. Finally, different study programmes at colleges and universities qualify for the work in ECEC, e.g. social pedagogues or childhood pedagogues. These professionals hold at least a bachelor's degree. There may also be trainees and interns who come to work in day cares temporarily, often after finishing high school. The majority of pedagogical staff in ECEC settings in Germany is qualified as educators.

About 71% of ECEC staff is educated as a preschool teacher/educator (Erzieher/innen) (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2013). Their qualifications come from vocational schools, as mentioned, for social pedagogy, called Fachschulen für Sozialpädagogik, or vocational academies (Fachakademien) in Bavaria. They must have finished secondary school and in some states, also have relevant prior work experience. Their programmes generally last around three years, with two years of teaching and a one-year internship. The programme can sometimes be shortened if students have relevant prior work experience. In all states, there are examinations at the end of the vocational programme, and successful passage ensures an official degree. Some states, however, integrate the practical and theoretical components more than others during the course of the education.

Another route to an educator degree is through vocational schools for social work (Berufsfachschulen für Sozialwesen), which are upper secondary schools that allow students to begin studying toward their selected vocations earlier. This is a similarly structured education, but the degree is officially recognised and students are also qualified for continuing education. Educators from these programmes

often work in ECEC institutions, but may also find work in hospitals, youth centres, counselling centres and with the elderly.

In some western states, child care workers (kinderpflegerinnen) play a greater role than in other parts of the country. They undergo a two-year training at a vocationally-oriented secondary school and continue with a one-year day care centre internship (OECD, 2006, p. 163). They generally work with young children, under three years of age. Primary teachers, on the other hand, generally have university training. There is a large gap, then, between preschool teachers and primary teachers in "training, status and conditions of work" (OECD, 2006, p. 338).

Under the Bologna process, there is also the possibility to earn a degree in becoming what is called a Children's Pedagogue (Kindheitspädagoge), which is offered at universities of applied science or in Baden-Württemberg's teacher training colleges (Pädagogischen Hochschulen). The bachelor's programme lasts between three and four years and the degree received is a Bachelor of Arts, or if continued further into a more research-oriented direction, a Master of Arts. To get into the programme, students must bring field-specific work experience and must hold a high school leaving certificate (Hochschulreife), received after passing the first state examination (Abitur). Professionals with this degree work most often as managers of centres, especially larger ones, but also sometimes with children with disabilities (OECD, 2006).

Also under municipal control are day care human resources policies, which must follow broad national guidelines but otherwise vary widely. There are no set requirements for family day cares in private homes, other than that the providers take a course of about 160 hours before they begin (Lindeboom & Buiskool, 2013, p. 60).

Investments in ECEC are rising, resulting in many new study programmes at teacher training colleges and universities of applied sciences. The federal Ministry of Family Affairs is also supporting various professional development initiatives, including the Continuing Education of Early Childhood Professionals project (Weiterbildungsinitiative Frühpädagogische Fachkräfte, WIFF), which is an effort to support the professionalisation of the ECEC sector in Germany[23]. Conversely, there is a serious shortage of staff in the ECEC field, largely due to the expansion of ECEC settings. As a result, many states have implemented "transfer or career change policies", which lower the qualifications required to work in ECEC.

Characteristics of in-service professional development for ECEC educators

In Germany, qualification requirements and standards vary between its 16 federal states. There are also different requirements for different positions in the ECEC field, and the minimal required level of education for each position is decided by each state. As an example, the state of North Rhine Westphalia passed a law in 2005 to establish minimal qualification standards for day care workers. Then in 2008, the NRW Child Education Act provided additional guidance about ECEC staff qualifications (KiBiz, § 26 Abs. 3 Nr. 3). It differentiated between preschool teachers, who have specialised qualifications and knowledge, and support staff, who must have at least finished a vocational training. At most, a day care's staff must be comprised of no more than half support staff.

For support staff, the NRW law stipulates that they can undertake professional development programmes in order to improve their competences, and they can also receive qualifications based on

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[23] For more information, see the Training Initiative for Early Childhood Profeesionals, at (in German) www.weiterbildungsinitiative.de/themen/professionalisierung/hintergrund-professionalisierung

prior experiences. Managers of day care centres must have the required education level as well as substantial work experience.

Most ECEC workers are trained at vocational institutions. This means that there have traditionally been fewer staff members with tertiary degrees than in other countries, but also fewer staff members without formal qualifications. Vocational training is therefore generally seen as an advantage of the German system. In terms of professional skills and knowledge, there is a need for German practitioners to update their competences, but the issue is not gaining much traction and there are not enough opportunities offered currently. This is despite the fact that many states require practitioners to attend some professional development programmes.

The main facilitators of in-service trainings are state academies. The state of Baden-Württemberg, for example, has four such institutions, and North Rhine-Westphalia has its large State Institution for School Education, which has 180 employees. It is recognised in NRW that lifelong learning is a vital component in teaching quality, and the state has created guidelines for staff development along these lines. Day care providers and schools, however, have the responsibility to implement these requirements (Lindeboom & Buiskool, 2013, p. 73). Local education boards are also moving into this area (Halász, Santiago, Ekholm, Matthews, & McKenzie, 2004, p. 3).

ECEC educators are given study leave to attend in-service trainings, which can also then lead to the possibility of promotions and salary raises (OECD, 2012, p. 218). Financial support for those who attend these trainings, whether for covering training costs or for lost wages, varies widely between ECEC settings. Moreover, there is a growing number of independent training and professional development providers are entering the market and offering various additional trainings (Lindeboom & Buiskool, 2013).

Recent years have brought several changes to the German ECEC system, including higher numbers of children under three years of age, and more children with immigrant backgrounds. The demographic trend brings higher amounts of children with an immigration background into preschool centres and coupled with the rising flexibility of the job market, this also leads to more flexible opening hours of centres. For instance, in Berlin, the first 24h-preschools have opened. In tandem, government curricula are calling for more academic-related learning in addition to a socio-emotional focus; however, there are no training programmes to support staff in making this transition. As a result, professional development and coping strategies are largely individualised from centre to centre. Nevertheless, ECEC providers, municipalities as well as federal states offer different resources that allow for professional networking, best practice exchanges and practical support. Teacher and staff associations exist for the largest providers (e.g. the churches).

ECEC educators' role, responsibility and quality concepts

In Germany, each state decides its own curriculum, but many share common principles. The responsibility for implementing curricular changes, planning ECEC in-service trainings and adhering to quality standards lies with the state administrations and public and private education organisations. Practitioners themselves are expected to reflect on pedagogical process and actively participate in in-service trainings by sharing their knowledge and experiences[24].

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[24] See WP2's D2.1 "Overview of European ECEC Curricula and Curriculum Template" for the difference between the national guidelines amd the curricular frameworks at the level of the federal states.

ECEC curricula were introduced in each state in 2004, by the recommendation of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder, with the aim of adapting curriculum of pre-service education and training in order to meet the content of the ECEC-curricula. After introducing the ECEC-curricula to each federal state, information events and in-service trainings designed to support staff members were provided (KMK, 2004). These offerings are generally optional for practitioners, and in every state but Saxony they are publically financed. Also in 2004 the ministers of education and cultural affairs recommended adapting the pre-service education and training curriculum to match the content of the established ECEC curricula. The ECEC system has undergone a shift, serving now higher numbers of children under three years of age, and higher numbers of children with an immigration background. Curricular frameworks ask for learning opportunities in (pre-)academic areas as well as the socio-emotional domain, as mentioned earlier; however, previous training programmes have not prioritised (pre-)academic learning. As such, there is a high need for continual in-service professional development, though these opportunities are not offered as needed. The extent to which this is done, however, is decided by each state. In Bavaria, for example, the ECEC curriculum serves as the orientation framework for pre-service education and in-service trainings. In other states, the situation varies widely, from recommendations to refer back to the ECEC curriculum to no mention of the official curricula whatsoever[25].

Though higher educational institutions with ECEC programmes vary by state, the most common group is vocational schools for social pedagogy. Their curricula vary widely when it comes to ECEC, especially because programmes may also include other occupational fields outside of ECEC, such as youth services. Some of these programmes' curricula don't mention the ECEC curricula at all; others explicitly link it to ECEC curricula by pointing out how both curricula take inspiration from the same pedagogical and educational principles, for example.

Policy developments and reforms

In Germany, the discussion around staff qualifications and professional developments centre on the following issues:

- how to increase the number of staff with university degrees;
- how to attract more male practitioners to the field;
- increasing ECEC professionals' salaries;
- greater regulation/control of the qualifications for home day care staff;
- the need for better qualifications for practitioners working with children under 3 years old;
- the need for qualified staff to implement curriculum guidelines.

All of these issues are compounded by a skills shortage in the German ECEC system. In addition, beginning in 2013, all children in Germany over the age of one year old were officially guaranteed a place in the ECEC system, resulting in increased enrolment (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2013). Despite or perhaps in light of this expansion, the demand for ECEC is still not fulfilled and is also increasing.

Quality assurance regulation, monitoring and evaluation

In general, quality regulations are set in guidelines issued by Germany's federal states (Länderausführungsgesetze), which falls under the governance of youth welfare. The federal

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[25] See WP2's D2.1 "Overview of European ECEC Curricula and Curriculum Template" for more information.

government is in charge of additional funding and facilitating cooperation between the states, and also, according to the OECD (2012).

There are no systematic studies that exist on evaluations, nor longitudinal studies. However a number of related studies, research, reviews have been conducted within the WIFF-initiative (Kalicki, n.d.). The study AVE (Ausbildung und Verlauf von Erzieherinnen-Merkmalen[26]) is also trying to shed light on empirical evidence on potential benefits of professional development.

Highlights of innovative approaches

Despite not having an official definition of innovation with respect to professional development in ECEC, there is a general sense that innovative initiatives go beyond new programmes of study and refer to enhanced effectiveness in:

- new career options for staff in-service professional development
- greater outreach with ECEC practitioners in order to strengthen their professional competencies
- enabling students of ECEC and practitioners from diverse backgrounds develop high qualifications.

An example of an innovative approach is the Early Chances initiative, through which the government sponsors an ECEC teacher with special qualifications in language education. That teacher receives special trainings and is then tasked with coaching his or her entire ECEC staff in that area. The initiative aims especially at the work with children up to the age of three[27].

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[26] For more information, see (in German) www.phfreiburg.de/psychologie/ave

[27] For mor information, see the "Good Early Childhood Edeucation and Care", at http://www.fruehe-chancen.de/en/

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E. Greece

Introductory snapshot

In Greece, since 2013 there is a central online platform ("my school") of the Ministry of Education that collects data regarding attendance rates for children registered in kindergartens, i.e. aged between 4 and 6 years. The data however are not publicly available but principally for monitoring reasons. On the other hand, there is no official national agency that collects data regarding infant/child care centres (I/CCCs) for children under the age of five. The two institutions are under the auspices of two different ministries.

The majority (91%) of children participating in ECEC are between 2.5 and 6.5 years old (by the year of their 6th birthdays children enter the elementary school), so children younger than 2.5 years comprise less than 10% of the ECEC system.

Based principally on published sources/reports, it seems that the share of non-public (private) kindergartens in the market is small. Only 7% of children between the ages of four and six participating in ECEC settings attend non-public institutions. Respectively, the number of non-public settings (5%) and the number of professionals who work there (4%) are also low compared with the public alternatives. The main employer of kindergarten teachers, therefore, is the public sector.

Data concerning the professional careers of ECEC-trained graduates are not gathered by any institution in the country.

Pre-service professional development:
ECEC educators' qualification requirements,
standards and resources

In Greece, ECEC is divided into two totally discrete systems, with different education requirements, buildings, governing bodies and funding sources for each. The first system is for infant/child care centres, which generally provide care for children up to four years old (or sometimes five, depending on availability at kindergartens). These child care centres are under the direct authority of local municipalities, and indirectly under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior (for public centres) and partly, with a recent decision (February 2015), of the Ministry of Employment (for private centres) with regard to their licensing. They may require monthly fees based on family income, and priority is given to the children of poor, single-parent, at-risk or working families. The second system is for kindergartens, which are compulsory for five- year-olds (at the age of 6 children enter the primary school), but sometimes include four-year-olds depending on the availability. All kindergartens (private and public) are under the purview of the Ministry of Education, and public sector kindergartens are free of charge.

Early childhood educators, those who work in infant/child care centres, are required by national law to be graduates of a four-year programme at a Technological Educational Institute's (TEI) department of early childhood education and care (formerly called Centres of Higher Technical and Vocational Education). TEIs are tertiary education institutions with technical/vocational orientations, and there are three in the country with an ECEC department. To attend, students must pass a competitive university entrance exam carried out nationally by the Ministry of Education.

The first 3.5 years at TEIs contain courses oriented toward either theoretical or practical issues, which include courses on pedagogy, psychology, sociology, special themes (such as environmental or health education), physiology and paediatrics, and arts courses such as music, drama or puppetry. TEIs are in charge of their own curricula and training guidelines, as there is no national set of requirements (Evangelou & Cortessis-Dafermou, 2005). Programme structure therefore varies among departments, especially with regard to which courses are compulsory and which are elective. The final semester is reserved for practical training, which takes place in infant/child care centres or preschool classrooms, and a dissertation. One challenge facing TEIs in particular is that due to a lack of personnel, they have had not been able to guarantee qualified early childhood educators to monitor and guide the practical training.

In the Greek ECEC system, there is also an option to become an early childhood educator assistant. Assistants study a similar mix of practical and theoretical courses as educators do, earning a two-year degree from a private or public vocational/technological college, either in a post-Gymnasium (junior high-school) or a post-Lyceum (senior high-school) level. They specialise in programmes such as assistant early childhood educator, assistant baby nurse, welfare caretaker, social caregiver, or caretaker of children with special needs. Several public and private institutions offer these degree programmes, including the Institute of Vocational Training, the Technical Vocational School, the Unified Multidisciplinary Lyceum and the Manpower Employment Organization.

In terms of funding, there is little support from the Greek state or public sector in general for early child care educators' and educator assistants' professional development. This attitude has been aggravated by the economic crisis and ensuing recession and cuts to public programmes.

Teachers in the second (kindergarten) system must be graduates of one of the country's nine university departments of preschool education or early childhood education. These departments, formerly two-year preschool education academies, were established in 1984 and now offer four-year programmes that include practical trainings in public kindergartens. These departments decide their own curricula, and structures vary widely, just as with the early childhood education departments. Most programmes include courses on pedagogy, teaching and research methodologies, psychology, sociology, especially themed educational courses, Greek language, music, fine arts, foreign languages and so on. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki's Department of Pre-School Education Sciences, for example, divides its programme into four sections: education; psychology and special education themes; language and history; and aesthetic education (Oberhuemer et al., 2010). They are all related, however, to the national kindergarten curriculum. Prospective public kindergarten teachers should succeed in national examinations.

Critical reflection is a key issue in pre-service kindergarten teacher training programmes, especially during the practicum experience. Peer teaching, collaborative learning, collective reflection, action research and lesson study are among the methods used that focus on critical reflection. One study found that posing different kinds of questions to student teachers during their practicum periods encouraged different kinds of reflections (Avgitidou & Hatzoglou, 2012). Asking students to make generalisations, for example, was more effective at getting them to achieve higher levels of reflection. Similar benefits were found with questions that asked students to not just describe and evaluate their practices, but also to analyse their evaluations and provide examples as well as alternative solutions (ibid.). Avgitidou (2011) also demonstrated how using journaling as a research method can enhance and promote reflective practices.

In conclusion, both early childhood educators and preschool/kindergarten teachers in Greece have tertiary-level educational qualifications. Those working in the I/CCCs' system, with children under four (or five) years of age, have no centralised plan for professional development, and there is little movement toward creating one. The situation is better for those in the kindergartens' system, working principally with five- and six-year-olds, who receive locally organised orientation trainings before

starting work, and work in schools more likely to offer situated in-service trainings. Monitoring and guidance provided by school advisors (ministerial decision Φ353/1/324/105657/Δ1/08-10-2002, act 9) could be regarded as another form of training, based on personal or/and local requirements.

Characteristics of in-service professional development for ECEC educators

Early childhood educators have few chances for professional development compared to their kindergarten teacher peers. In the public sector, opportunities for the type and extent of the in-service training provided to childcare centres' educators are dependent on each municipality's social-educational policy and available resources. Childcare educators also have limited opportunities to participate in workshops and seminars arranged by professional bodies, unions or scientific organisations, and the Greek government has not issued any guidance about increasing opportunities. PASYVN, the public union that represents graduates of the three TEI departments in the country, does organise some workshops, seminars and conferences, and TEI departments themselves may also organise conferences and workshops. Some other smaller-scale scientific bodies occasionally organise similar events. Some municipalities cover participation fees for the ECEC staff who attends, but it is entirely at municipalities' discretion whether they will cover the costs. Although the Operating Regulations developed by each municipal ECEC centre generally emphasise staff professional development and high levels of qualification, no specific plans are described and no relevant resources are provided. There is lack of information regarding the private sector's childcare educators. There is also a lack of relevant research about early childhood educators' professional development, and there are no known evaluation procedures.

Greek kindergarten teachers are seen as highly qualified, with the scientific background and pedagogic skills to run effective classrooms. Two national laws from 1992 (Presidential Decree 250, FEK 138/10-08-1992; N2009/92 act 17 §3 & 6) recommended three forms of training for public school teachers (including kindergarten teachers): 1) a pre-service training of up to four months; 2) a two-year training after at least five years working in a kindergarten; and 3) two training periods for up to three months for selected teachers, as well as occasional short-term trainings organised locally or nationally throughout the school year. This third type of training lasted between 10-100 hours for general education teachers and up to 200 hours for those working in special education. Currently, however, the only type of training still available out of the three is the initial pre-service training for newly hired kindergarten teachers (only for the public sector). The other two types of training have been cut due to public-sector cutbacks and decreased EU funding.

In-service trainings for kindergarten teachers are compulsory if there are specific pressing issues (such as the introduction of ICT) or for updating teachers about policy reforms; they are organised centrally by the Ministry of Education in such cases. The current in-service training context, however, is characterised by short, regular workshops and seminars conducted by external experts. This system is seen by many as inadequate, especially as budget cuts have led to problems such as the previously mentioned lack of qualified kindergarten teachers to guide student teachers during their practicums. This situation has widened the gap between theory and practice, and critics say that the current in-service offerings do not address the issue. Locally organised trainings are a positive step, and there are some developments such as the incorporation of critical reflection in in-service trainings, but there is still a troubling lack of coordination, evaluation and central planning when it comes to professional development for teachers. Kindergartens that organise their own relevant training programmes must find funding through subsidies, donations or similar means, because there are no regulations that mandate government funding for training and development. There is also little new research being done to inform educational professional development policies.

In addition, new teachers attend an introductory seminar organised by local education authorities. These can focus on working with children from socially disadvantaged families, for example, offering new teachers theoretical background knowledge and teaching methodologies that correspond with the diversity and inclusion issues that arise in the classroom and also during their collaboration with families and communities. One example of such a programme is the national Roma Children Education Project, which targets kindergartens and primary schools with immigrant populations of higher than 20%[28]. The introductory trainings in general have been criticised, however, for an inability to address the actual needs of teachers (see for example Mpatsouta & Papagiannidou, 2006). The problem is seen in the rollout of a new kindergarten curriculum from 2011, which has not included any relevant specialised training for any educational workers and has therefore brought on many implementation problems (Cross-thematic Curriculum Framework Syllabus Design, 2004; New Kindergarten Curriculum, 2011). Although the new curriculum specifically emphasises kindergarten teachers' professional development and high level of qualification, it does not provide specific plans or relevant resources, and as such seems incomplete to many professionals. It also includes a new teacher evaluation system, which has been criticised by some teachers for its lack of explicitly stated professional development policies and relevant resources.

Given the lack of relevant, centrally organised in-service training programmes, teachers are increasingly drawn to training courses provided by private organisations and/or university departments[29]. These have been flourishing over the past few years, and are usually relatively intensive and costly.

In summary, Greece's two systems vary considerably in their approach to professional development, with its second system (for kindergarten teachers) offering teachers a bare-bones in-service training system, while early childhood educators in I/CCCs have scant resources. As with many perspectives of the quality issue, public funding cuts are contributing to a weakening professional development system and, in this case, an increasing gap between pedagogical theory and practice.

ECEC educators' role, responsibility and quality concepts

Greek pre-service study programmes for infant/child care centre educators focus mainly on teaching methods, projects, play, and pedagogical approaches (e.g. the Reggio Emilia approach). There is no mention of quality concepts, assessment or strategies. There is also no national curriculum, so ECEC centres rely on their individual Operating Regulations that briefly outline structural characteristics, standards, daily activity schedules and procedures. In concrete terms, this means that the conceptions of an educator's role varies by centre and is not well-defined.

The Operating Regulations are required to specify that staff must work to cultivate and further develop their knowledge and skills by participating in scientific research and events (General duties staff, FEK 497/2002, Article 17). This is the only reference made to staff professional development in the national regulations, however. There is also an outline of staff members' specific duties and responsibilities, but no mention of how they should actually carry out a daily schedule or programme. There is no reference to quality standards or how to meet them.

FEK 497/2002 does mandate an adult-to-child ratio and acceptable group size. According to the law, group size in infant/toddler classrooms should be 12 infants and in kindergarten classrooms it should

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[28] For more infmration, see (in Greek) www.keda.gr/epam/actions_sup.html

[29] As an example, see (in Greek) www.publicedu.elke.uoa.gr

be no more than 25 children. The mandated adult-to-child ratio is 12 infants for every two caregivers and one assistant for infant/toddler classrooms, and 25 toddlers for one caregiver and one assistant. However, research suggests that in many instances even higher ratios and group sizes have been noticed (Rentzou, 2014; Rentzou & Sakellariou, 2011).

Kindergartens, on the other hand, have a national curriculum that was introduced in 2004 and updated in 2011. It was the first time an educational policy had recognised the kindergarten teacher as a professional with the necessary knowledge base to apply new curricular policies. It also emphasised a holistic approach to knowledge and authentic assessment and differentiated teaching, as well as identified kindergarten teachers as the professionals specifically in charge of organizing the learning environment and designing and implementing activities that address the varying needs, talents and interests of every student (New Kindergarten Curriculum, Part 1, PI: 2011[30]).

In pre-service education, none of the nine relevant university departments offer specialised courses that address how to implement the national curriculum. There are courses, however, that discuss educational philosophies, teaching methods and strategies, and pedagogical perspectives to familiarise future kindergarten teachers with the basic conceptual and methodological background introduced in the curriculum[31]. Moreover, students in preschool education departments must design and implement a kindergarten educational programme that meets the requirements of the national curriculum during their student teaching period. Their mentors and supervisors guide them through the process and their efforts to familiarise themselves with the curricular framework, details and challenges. Throughout the pre-service education process, there is no explicit mention of quality.

Policy developments and reforms

In the realm of infant/child care centres, there are no current developments in policies related to qualifications, professional development or required staffing levels. However, the Pan-Hellenic Association of Early Childhood Educators (PASYVN[32]) is working to bring the issue to greater attention through organising regular scientific meetings, conferences and other educational events, as well as by pushing for a unified ECEC system with more clearly developed regulations about staff qualifications.

More reforms have affected kindergartens in the past years. In 2010, a national law mandated the necessary qualifications for ECEC staff to achieve professional advancement and assignment to administrative positions (Law 3848-FEK 71-19/5/2010). These include teaching expertise, required in-service trainings and specialisations, and ICT skills. This reform broadened the professional development track by expanding the criteria from the previous policy, which mainly looked at length of work experience and seniority.

In 2013, a new system of teacher evaluation was introduced that looked at in-service training experiences in particular (Presidential Decree 152-FEK 240-5/11/2013). It declared that in-service trainings should try to build teachers' motivation toward developing high-quality education and lifelong learning. The law also stipulated that kindergarten teachers could only be evaluated as

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[30] Full details can be obtained (in Greek) at
http://digitalschool.minedu.gov.gr/info/newps/%CE%A0%CF%81%CE%BF%CF%83%CF%87%CE%BF%CE%BB%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE%20-
%20%CE%A0%CF%81%CF%8E%CF%84%CE%B7%20%CE%A3%CF%87%CE%BF%CE%BB%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE%20%CE%97%CE%BB%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AF%CE%B1/1%CE%BF%20%CE%9C%CE%AD%CF%81%CE%BF%CF%82.pdf

[31] See for example www.edc.uoc.gr/ptpe/attachments/article/455/perigrammata_english_2013-14.pdf

[32] For more information, see www.pasyvn.gr/en.html

"exceptional" if they held a master's or doctorate degree and could show continuous academic effort (through conference presentations or published works, for example). In addition, the new criteria for professional development include in-service training, administrative experience and participation in or development of innovative educational programmes.

Quality assurance regulation, monitoring and evaluation

With regard to early childcare educators, there is no national strategy for professional development and no systems of quality monitoring and assurance at any government level. The above-mentioned childcare centre Operating Regulations do mention quality as it pertains to structural features of day care centres, but there is no mention of early childhood educators' professional development.

There are no widely used evaluation systems of early childhood educators' professional development, and some research studies have cited the lack of a professional development system as one factor (among many) that results in low ECEC quality and that also affects the way early childhood educators evaluate the quality of services they themselves provide (Rentzou, 2011, 2012). Interestingly, Rentzou (2011, 2012) found that educators with lower education levels evaluated their own classrooms more highly, using the Association for Childhood Education International's Global Guidelines Assessment[33]. Educators with higher educational levels ranked their own classrooms lower. Rentzou (2011, 2012) also found that many educators acknowledge the need for more professional development opportunities, even though no Greek studies have shown exactly how professional development, or the lack of it, might affect ECEC quality. Interestingly, the same studies found no correlation between early childhood educators' levels of education and ratings assigned to the Caregiver Interaction Scale and the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS), other global quality assessment systems.[34] This assertion may be further supported by the fact that years of experience, more than education level, has been found to be correlated with quality rating scales.

Turning to kindergarten teachers, there are in-service training programmes offered by public and private organisations, mainly locally organised and carried out. There is no oversight from the national Ministry of Education, as has been the norm since 1995 (Grollios, 1998), and the in-services are not a part of any national strategy to improve kindergarten teachers' professional development. In fact, there is some criticism that the offered in-service trainings are not relevant enough to the actual needs of current teachers (Mavroedis & Typas, 2001).

There is a framework in place that mandates which organisations can provide in-service trainings for public employees. For kindergarten teachers, these organisations include peripheral education centres, university departments, technological educational institutions, school networks, school advisors, the Hellenic Open University, and specified unions, institutes or scientific centres. These groups receive limited funding from the state and usually the training fees are paid by the participants. There are also

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[33] The Global Guidelines Assessment (GGA) was designed to assist ECEC programmes around the world with assessing their own programmes, with the hope that they will they will then use the information to make improvements. The assessment was developed with the input of professionals from 27 countries, and contains 76 questions in five programme content areas: Environment and Physical Space, Curriculum Content and Pedagogy, Early Childhood Educators and Caregivers, Partnerships with Families and Communities, and Young Children with Special Needs. The latest version (from 2011) is available in seven languages at, www.acei.org/acei-news/acei-global-guidelines-assessment.html

[34] ITERS, an assessment developed by the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina (USA), is designed for programmes that work with children up to 30 months of age. The assessment contains 39 items in seven areas: Space and Furnishings, Personal Care Routines, Listening and Talking, Activities, Interaction, Programme Structure and Parents and Staff. It There is also a separate assessment for early childhood environments. For more information, see www.ers.fpg.unc.edu

professional development courses provided by private organisations and teacher training consultants[35]. These are often costly and there is often no guarantee that the courses will be valid in the public sector.

A kindergarten teacher evaluation process, expected to be released next year (2016), will include an assessment of teachers' professional development. It has not been explicitly clarified, however, whether this process will be used as a way to chart teachers' professional growth with a view of improving the system. Similar to the situation with infant/child care educators, there is no systematic research on kindergartens that addresses the impact of professional development on quality and/or on child outcomes. However, a few studies do provide evidence for the relation between certain aspects of professional development (such as in-service teaching experience and education level) and quality perspectives. Concretely, kindergarten teachers' education level seems to negatively predict the way mothers understand the quality of communication with the teachers (Penderi, 2012). Conversely, kindergarten teachers' educational level has been positively correlated with their ideas about the level of trust in their relationship with parents in the classroom (Petrogiannis & Penderi, 2014).

In conclusion, a number of organisations have stepped forward to try and fill the quality assurance and monitoring gap left open by the national government. These include the Pan-Hellenic Association of Early Childhood Educators union, public educational institutions and private providers. Despite their efforts, the issue of quality in ECEC settings is not widely discussed or debated.

Highlights of innovative approaches

In general, innovative approaches are those which consider in-service programmes as part of a continuum of professional development; involve ECEC professionals in their professional development via action research; involve teachers in planning and implementation of programmes; and receive official recognition by the ministry or local authority. Further, in-service professional development could be described as innovative when it: uses modern methods and techniques in adult education; aims at changing/transforming beliefs, principles and practices; introduces new teaching approaches; promotes the use of new educational materials/means; combines theory with practice; considers the particular trainees' characteristics, needs and interests; and promotes lifelong learning.

Although there is no official definition of innovative programmes in the Greek setting, three past projects highlight the above-mentioned perspective. The projects were undertaken between 1997-2000, pilot-tested by the Ministry of Education and were suspended in 2000 when the sponsoring European Union programme cut funding (Papanaoum, 2001). Of the three projects, two were related specifically to kindergarten teaching and were promoted by universities.

The first example is the Laboratory of Pedagogical Research and Educational Practices at the Democritus University of Thrace. Housed in the Department of Educational Sciences in Preschool Age, the laboratory offered an in-service course for public kindergarten teachers on the topic of "Lesson study method" in 2013. The course explored assessments for learning and reflection in the classroom to improve the educational work and climate. Teachers were asked to use their own experiences and resources to develop learning community cultures in their schools, after learning methods based on cooperative learning, reflection and self-improvement.

In 1997-2000, the University of Thessaloniki organised a series of programmes for kindergarten teachers that took place in the schools. The goal was to put into practice training activities that addressed each school's specific needs and situation. The programme was suspended in 2000 and

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[35] See for example, www.haef.gr/el/AdultPrograms/Educate/Educators/eng

although the initial results were positive, there was no discussion of national implementation (Papanaoum, 2001).

The third example is the Synergy Project, implemented by the Corporation for the Development and Creative Occupation of Children (EADAP). The programme, developed in cooperation with other European research teams, consisted of in-school kindergarten teacher trainings that took place in a small number of kindergartens in the greater Athens area. Trainings aimed to improve teaching quality and student learning experiences, enhance teachers' educational work and professional roles, and familiarise them with distance learning (Papaprokopiou & Papadakou, 2004). The methods were based on adult education principles and action research methodology.

Finally the Early Q project[36] should be mentioned which was initiated in 2013, and is funded by "Thalis" research grant scheme. The main aim of this project is the evaluation of the ECEC quality in Greek kindergartens through the use of ECERS-R and ECERS-E, as well as kindergarten teacher training about how to use those rating scales.

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[36] For more information, see www.earlyquality.teithe.gr/index.php/en/earlyq-project/skopos

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F. Italy

Introductory snapshot

(Sources: Fortunati, 2012; Govi, 2012; Gruppo CRC, 2014; ISTAT, 2014; MIUR, 2014b)

The attendance rate of children under the age of three is estimated between 19% and 20% and this figure includes attendance to nursery schools (or *Nidi d'infanzia*), other part time services and *Sezioni Primavera* (classes for children 2-3 years old which are hosted either in *Scuole dell'infanzia* or in *Nidi)*.

Over 70% of these services are provided by Municipalities. The Regional distribution is highly unbalanced, ranging from 1% to 40%, and is particularly low in the South and isles where many municipalities do not provide any service.

The attendance is almost five time higher for children 3-6 and reaches 98%, 94,4% attend *Scuole dell'infanzia*, and an estimate of 3-4% of children anticipate attendance to primary school at 5 years. The main provider is the state (60%), Municipal schools are attended by 9%-10% of children, mainly in big and medium cities in the North and in the Centre and 30% are private schools, almost all accepting the National Guidelines and obtaining some financial support by the state.

Children with immigrant background attending *Nidi* or *Scuole dell'infanzia* can be estimated around 10% and children with certified special needs can be estimated around 2%.

While pre-service professional development is provided mainly by public schools and state universities[37], in-service professional development in recent years has been mainly provided at local - municipal or regional – level. The Ministry of Education has sustained some special projects and some experimental projects for the in service training of teachers of (or working in) *Sezioni Primavera*.

Pre-service professional development: ECEC educators' qualification requirements, standards and resources

The Italian pre-primary system is split between *nido,* nursery school for children from birth to age three, and *scuole dell'infanzia*, preschool for children aged three to six. Nursery schools are run by municipalities and regions, while the national government is in charge of preschools. This divide has produced several differences between the two systems, such as differences in staff qualifications and the fact that only the preschool level has official national guidelines. Professionals are called *educatori* (educators) in nursery schools and *insegnanti* (teachers) in preschools. One common feature is that there are no assistants but only one type of staff, both in the *nido* and in *scuola dell'infanzia*.

Regions are entitled to define qualifications for nursery school educators. The national trend is to encourage higher qualifications and give priority to recruiting candidates with a bachelor's degree in education or a high school (five-year) diploma with a focus on education (*liceo sociopsicopedagogico* or *liceo delle scienze umane*). In some cases, a shorter vocational diploma, i.e. a three-year secondary vocational school license (*tecnico dei servizi sociali, assistente di comunità infantile*) is still accepted, but this is becoming less common. In line with the rest of Europe, there is a tendency toward

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[37] Only two private universities train preschool teachers: The Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore and the LUMSA (Libera Università Santissima Assunta) and the University of Rome.

academisation, and a movement toward requiring all educators to attain a three-year bachelor's degree, except for family day care centres. In the regions where ECEC services for under-threes are more developed and there is more established effort to define and promote quality, e.g. Emilia Romagna, Tuscany and Umbria, the required qualifications tend to be higher. Despite providers' fears that an increase in qualifications might lead to an increase in salary, the process is moving forward.

Since 2010 teachers at *scuola dell'infanzia* have been required to earn a five-year university degree (*Scienze della Formazione Primaria)* that qualifies them for teaching both in s*cuola dell'infanzia* and primary schools, so for children aged three to 11. This university degree is called a continuous cycle, meaning that it is not split into a bachelor's and a master's, but rather a single-degree course. The universities entitled to provide the five-year courses (one for each region and two each in Lombardy and Lazio), the syllabus, and the criteria for access (number of students and tests) are decided each year by the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research. The shift from a five-year degree (from the previous requirement of a four-year degree) has somewhat emphasised the focus on primary school in comparison to early childhood education.

The basic idea underlying the pre-service university courses for ECEC practitioners is to promote a "professional profile that is capable of transferring a multidisciplinary approach into teaching practice that can be adapted to different contexts" (Mantovani, 2007). Specifically, the three-year university course in educational sciences for educators who intend to work in day care centres offers a course that is mainly focused on human sciences, including laboratory activities, aimed at guaranteeing integration between theory and practice. Within this course, practical work (internship/*tirocinio*) is obligatory for all students and is carried out during the second and third years.

The number of hours dedicated to practical work is established by each university. For example, the course in educational science at the University of Milan-Bicocca has an established minimum of 250 hours: 100 hours during the second year and 150 hours during the third year. The practical work takes place in a variety of ECEC settings, including day cares, community centres and institutions. Each year, there is an evaluation of the practical work submitted to the supervisor, based on the students' reports and documentation. The five-year university degree in *Scienze della Formazione Primaria* gives teachers a specialisation in working with three- to six-year-old children through a multidisciplinary curriculum with a strong integration between theory and practice. The curriculum includes human sciences (education, psychology, sociology, anthropology), inclusive education for children with disabilities and immigrant backgrounds, and curricular disciplines (languages, history, geography, mathematics, sciences, art, music, etc.). The curriculum also requires participation in workshops and an internship. During the workshops (or lab work), students are split into small groups to share practical learning experiences and simulations of what they will do during their teaching practice internships. The internship begins in the second year, for a total of 600 hours divided between each year. Each university decides how to divide the hours over the years. For example, the University of Milano-Bicocca requires the following hours: 100 hours in the second year, 125 in the third, 175 in the fourth and 200 in the fifth.

Internship is composed of direct and indirect activities. They are carried out in preschools, where student teachers are supervised by experienced pre-primary or primary school teachers (These supervisors are recruited through a selection process to work at the university for a few years). There is approximately one supervisor for every 20-25 students. There is an orientation phase, an observation phase in schools, a phase for the preparation of a specific project and a final phase for implementation of the project. At the school which hosts the student, the host teacher cooperates with the supervising teacher in supervising and evaluating the practice. Thus, the curriculum is carried out in collaboration with schools: each university assigned a training course by the Ministry Education is supposed to contact the schools in the area. School teachers and directors therefore work directly with students; they are assigned part-time or full-time to universities to supervise students in the planning

and development of their practice teaching. The basic idea is to guarantee a good balance between theory and practice in the teacher-training process.

Evaluation and monitoring throughout the internship are the basis for intermediate and final assessments. At the end of each year of the internship, students turn in project documents, including teaching materials, and a final report.

There is also a final exam, called VIVA, which is a written dissertation and oral defence about the teaching project carried out in a host school. Successful completion of the VIVA exam means candidates earn Qualified Teacher Status for preschools and primary schools.

There are specific considerations made for preparing teachers to work with special needs children. The three-year university degree in educational science, for example, includes courses in special education and the psychology of disability and inclusion to prepare educators to work specifically with special needs children between the ages of zero and three. The five-year university degree in *Scienze della Formazione Primaria* includes courses about inclusive education. In addition, teachers who want to work as special needs teachers are required to attend an extra 60 ECTS annual course focused on using new technologies to work with special needs children. The course includes lectures, workshops and practical work.

The results of these different systems is that while teachers working with children aged three to six have the same status as primary school teachers, teachers working in infant/toddler centres have, in general, lower pre-service qualifications and lower salaries**.** A new Legislative Proposal (1260/2014), which has been just included in the recent bill (5 March 2015), would create an integrated system for ECEC for all children, from birth through age six. The bill would also set new standards for ECEC services (*livelli essenziali di prestazione,* or basic service levels) including national criteria, guarantee funding for *nidi* and *scuole dell'infanzia,* and require that educators in *nidi* earn a bachelor's degree.

In summary, the ECEC in Italy is divided into nursery school, which is staffed by educators, and preschool, which is staffed by teachers. Educator qualifications are decided by each region, with a trend toward requiring a three-year bachelor's degree. Teachers must have five-year university degrees. Pre-service education programmes in the field are characterised by obligatory internships and a focus on integrating theory and practice.

Characteristics of in-service professional development for ECEC educators

ECEC professional development in Italy, in the areas where it is sustained, is characterised as a process aimed at building understanding and awareness of the meanings and methods of education, the central qualifying points of the educational project, and the specific competencies of the various professional roles (Mantovani, 2010). The core idea is to promote critical reflection on practices, connecting them to theories and goals. Collegiality and inter-subjective discussion of observations, documentations and projects have been and still are major dimensions of professional practice. In most cases, all the personnel (staff, educators or teachers, pedagogical coordinators, etc.) are involved in professional development initiatives.

In the Italian system, in-service professional development for ECEC practitioners has always been considered both a duty and a right, and has traditionally been strongly connected with local communities. Starting from the 1970s and 1980s, the Italian ECEC system invested in continuing professional development (*formazione permanente)* at the local level. Many cities created connections with universities or research centres to establish both regular professional development practices and action-research, or to supervise experiments characterised by teamwork, co-constructed project work,

documentation, reflective work and a focus on the work with families and community (*partecipazione*). At present, opportunities for professional development and in-service training vary across the country, and between the nursery school and preschool sectors.

Municipalities which have invested in ECEC tend to maintain funding for in-service professional development for nursery school educators as much as possible, and in some instances they make connections with universities and research centres such as the Institute of Cognitive Sciences and Technologies (ISTC) or the National Research Council, or set up documentation centres or local centres/services which organise and provide, directly or by hiring experts, supervision on specific projects. Examples of such municipalities include Milan, Genova, Torino, Rome, Reggio Emilia and Trento. Other providers might organise their own professional development programmes.

For preschool teachers, continuous training is provided for public schools by the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research, although funds allocated to this purpose have steadily and markedly decreased over recent years. For municipal schools or schools run by other providers, the situation is the same as for nursery schools, as described above.

In general, contracts for professionals working in municipal ECEC services, both for nursery schools and preschools, range from between 100 and 200 paid yearly hours for activities which do not engage them directly with children, such as planning, group meetings, meetings with parents and in-service professional development. In cases where professional development is based on special projects, evaluation is required.

In state schools there is, at present, no specific obligation for organised and documented in-service professional development. An average of 12-15 hours of professional development per year, including individual study, can be roughly estimated. Some rare exceptions are state-funded in-service professional development for special projects such as *Sezioni Primavera,* a programme that targets two- and three-year olds' transitions from nursery school to preschool. At present, the government is discussing a bill to reintroduce compulsory in-service professional development, in particular for new teachers.

In Italian municipal schools, coordinators play a key role in teacher in-service trainings. These professional, qualified figures with pedagogical and management responsibilities work to improve quality at the local level. They operate in regions or in other associations directly running ECEC settings. A professional profile of pedagogical coordinators does not exist at the national level and the qualification requirements are set by regional legislation at the tertiary level (a five-/four-year university degree). In some cases, pedagogical coordinators are recruited from among former municipal educators who qualify for this role.

State *scuole dell'infanzia* defer to the directors of the entire primary or comprehensive school. This position has no specific ECEC training, but satisfies the qualifications set by regional legislations at the tertiary level (a five/four-year university degree) and – in some cases – they are recruited among former municipal educators qualified for this role. Contracts in private ECEC settings vary widely. The two most important providers, a cooperative consortium (PAN) for nursery schools and FISM (*Federazione Italiana Scuole Materne)* for preschools, guarantee at least 12 hours per year, with the opportunity to increase the hours for special projects. In some places with strong traditions in ECEC investment, municipalities may entrust ECEC services to external services, often educational cooperatives, which guarantee between two and five hours per week for continuing professional development.

Current policy debates focus on concerns about both over-training and under-training with regard to pre-service education. One concern is that teachers working with three- to six- year-olds must not be over-trained, shifting their focus from taking care of young children to discipline and didactics. On the

other hand, there is equal concern about under-training for teachers working with children from zero to three. Additional concerns include the horizontal and vertical integration of services, pre-service education for ECEC staff, the creation of a new definition of responsibilities for teachers, continuity between the ECEC stages, and funding and sustainable new formats for in-service professional development.

Italian ECEC services have always been conceived of, since their founding, as inclusive and universal services for all children. National preschool guidelines from 1991 explicitly refer to the presence of immigrant families and children and in general to a multicultural society. The latest version (2012) also refers to La v*ia italiana per l'educazione interculturale e l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri (*the Italian way to intercultural education and the integration of foreign students in Italy). This pedagogical-cultural document includes targeted measures concerning immigrant pupils and intercultural perspectives as the new paradigm for interpreting current school contexts. In addition, 2010's Ministerial Decree 249, paragraph 14, states that the profile of graduates in primary educational sciences must include knowledge of "intercultural education." However, the same decree lacked specific references to intercultural education for future teachers. The guidelines for the reception and integration of foreign students (Ministry of Education, February 2014) state that "it is desirable that the training courses arranged for new teachers also provides structured training courses on intercultural issues. [...] Similarly, it is desirable that the work groups belonging to the Regional-Scholastic-Office promote intercultural in-service staff training interventions" (MIUR, 2014a, p. 21).

To summarise, throughout the present national discourses on the main strengths and weaknesses of the Italian ECEC professional development system, there seems to be a common feeling that the strong investment in continuous professional development, starting from the 1970s and 1980s, has to a great extent contributed to the development and popularity of ECEC. ECEC has been declared "the most loved school level in Italy" (OECD, 2001) and ECEC teachers and schools are generally perceived as hospitable, kind and welcoming. Rich professional development, implemented during the years of ECEC growth, have in many cases inspired and permeated primary schools. Networking agencies have also played an important role in this development, including the *Gruppo Nazionale Nidi Infanzia*[38]*,* NEST (Network of Staff and Teachers in Childcare Services[39]), and the *Network of University Infant-toddler Centres (Rete dei Nidi Universitari Italiani)* local networks within private schools.

The activities of the *Gruppo Nazionale Nidi Infanzia* constitute a good example of agency involvement in professional development. It is a bottom-up network of practitioners, researchers (academics), administrators and coordinators, which has acted to share about experiences and promote connections through the professional journals such as *Bambini* and *Infanzia*. The National Documentation Centre *(Instituto degli Innocenti)* and groups at the regional level have been the motors and disseminators of good practices, through conferences, local seminars, advocacy initiatives, publications and training institutes, and today they have become important interlocutors at the national level. The result of this networking is that in-service professional development, especially in *nidi*, shows many common features in priorities, approaches and themes in the same periods across the country. Although organised by different local authorities and different providers, this is one feature of the "*cultura dell'infanzia*" which has developed over the years despite the fact that the system is highly localised and fragmented.

A number of trends are influencing Italian professional development, which, as mentioned above, is centred on critical reflection. Professional development initiatives are mostly characterised by the

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[38] For more information, see www.grupponidiinfanzia.it

[39] For more information, see www.nest-project.eu/it

attempt to encourage critical thinking and reflective practices through teamwork, exchange programmes, training of key figures (pedagogical coordinators, multipliers, …), documentation, observation, teacher involvement in research (participatory research, action research), new technologies, and video feedback (see the project carried out in the *Nido Bambini Bicocca* in collaboration with the University of Tennessee, described in the Innovative Approaches Highlights section). In particular, blended training projects (online and in-person) are developing as new ways to promote collaboration between teachers, as well as connecting teachers working in different services and places (see the *Milano-Bambini* project, also discussed in the Innovative Approaches Highlights section). The use of technology also represents a useful support for implementing a new (and broader) type of documentation: the use of online platforms and databases to help guarantee access (for services and teachers/educators) to articles or documented experiences of "good practice" within ECEC services.

In summary, ECEC workers' professional development has a strong tradition of local support in Italy, especially among certain municipalities that have made it a priority. Opportunities vary between the nursery school and preschool sectors, which the former relying more on municipal or institutional funding, while the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research provides ongoing training for preschool teachers. Critical reflection, connected to observation and documentation, is the central trend, inspiring several new programmes despite increased budget cuts at the national level

ECEC educators' role, responsibility and quality concepts

The national guidelines for *scuola dell'infanzia* define the teacher's roles and responsibilities as follows: The presence of well-motivated, qualified teachers and teachers attentive to the specificities of children are fundamental quality components. Educational style is inspired by criteria of listening, support and participatory interaction, with continuous observation of the skills of the child. The teaching profession is enhanced through collaborative work, in-service training, the relationship with the knowledge and culture (National Guidelines for Preschools [Indicazioni Nazionali per il Curriculum della Scuola dell'infanzia], 2012*)*.

For *nidi* educators there are no national guidelines, although similar concepts, with a greater focus on children's emotional wellbeing, transition from home to *nido* and work with parents, can be found in most local guidelines (*Carte dei Servizi*.) The professional profile is someone with a good cultural background and, for preschool teachers, someone with a good variety of competences: someone who can work in teams, act as an organiser of contexts, spaces and groups, give priority to indirect teaching based on systematic observations of children in order to understand their differentiated needs, and set criteria for project work. The influence of Montessori and the Agazzi sisters on ECEC teachers is also evident in the promotion of strong parent participation.

The guidelines for preschools and infant-toddler centres in Reggio Emilia define the teacher's professional profiles, through the description of some principles, as follows: Children are active protagonists of their own growth and developmental processes; the hundred languages; listening; learning as a process of individual and group construction; educational research; documentation; *progettazione* (the process of planning and designing teaching and learning activities); organisation; environment-space and relationships; professional development; assessment (Reggio Emilia, April 2010).

University training is not based on the national nor on the local guidelines, which become familiar to student teachers mainly though their practice sessions. Although many programmes claim to pursue a holistic approach and the focus on adult/child, child/child and group relationships is still very strong, an increasing academisation of pre-service professional development is taking place. This is largely

due to the emphasis on discipline in the new pre-service curriculum for preschool and primary teachers, growing concerns about subsequent academic success, and themes such as the early second language learning.

Although a common feeling is that achieving quality ECEC depends on a well-trained core of early childhood educators and teachers, the connection between the quality of professional development and the quality of their work in ECEC is still under discussion. This issue deserves further study. How to evaluate the impact of pre-service and in-service training on quality practices and on ECEC quality in general is an object of debate, both in terms of approaches and the involvement of professionals in the process, and in the definition of methodologically valid instruments (see for example the research projects carried out in the *Nido-Bambini Bicocca* and the creation of observational tools for evaluating ECEC quality described in the section on innovative approaches).

Policy developments and reforms

Beyond the debate about pre-service under-training for nursery school educators and over-training for preschool teachers, and the discussion about how to monitor the impact of training on quality, the real question is in-service funding. Since 1998, with the progressive development of pre-service education at the post-secondary level and the economic crisis, investment in continuing professional development in terms of dedicated time and resources has diminished. (This is particularly true in state services, while municipal and FISM continue to invest in professional development). The challenges today are how to find ways to guarantee regular and sustainable continuing education connected with research and innovation. Ministry of Education resources currently only go toward special projects such as the *Sezioni Primavera*, experimental classes/groups for 2-to-3-year-olds. There have been (also in recent years) some instances of political and public support to guarantee innovative projects in ECEC and in the teachers' professional development, but they need to be extended and improved, in particular in the nursery school system. his is particularly true in state services, while municipal and FISM continue to invest in professional development).

The new bill (law 1260/2014) calls for an integrated 0-6 system mainly funded by the Ministry of Education. The programme would require a bachelor's degree for preschool teachers as well as obligatory in-service professional development. These measures are encompassed in a more general reform of the school system, raising hopes and also discussions because, if approved, they would redesign the whole ECEC system, and re-set the present balance between central and local responsibilities and between different providers and their long-established traditions. More specifically, possible developments are: redefining quality criteria, implementing activities in continuity with nursery schools and preschools, defining the professional profile of a teacher-educator at the national level, and implementing in-service training programmes. Striking a new balance between tradition and innovation represents a large challenge.

Quality assurance regulation, monitoring and evaluation

There is no systematic monitoring and evaluation of professional development in Italy, and no research being conducted on how professional development impacts ECECs. The most recent national evaluation of the school system, INVALSI (*Istituto Nazionale per la Valutazione del Sistema Scolastico),* is from 2003 and does not include the non-compulsory pre-primary level. The process of evaluating teachers and professional development (at other school levels) is just beginning for compulsory school levels.

Professional development has long been considered an obvious factor in ECEC quality. Despite this, little attention has been paid to the long-term effects of professional development on ECEC quality. The current lack of resources is beginning to stimulate a different form of evaluation (not the longitudinal effects on children) of professional development at municipal and regional levels, that the Ministry of Education has yet to comment on. A key feature for the development of a monitoring system is the network of coordinators, which currently only exists in two regions: Tuscany and Emilia Romagna.

However, a number of local evaluation initiatives of in-service professional development courses are in use. (It is important to note that ECEC and ECEC in-service professional development have traditionally been developed and funded locally, even after the national government first entered the field in 1968). In addition, several evaluation initiatives of ECEC quality, including professional development, are in place at the local level, and they list professional development as one of the most important factors (Bondioli & Ferrari, 2004; Bondioli & Savio, 2010). These evaluations are based on observation tools such as bottom-up experiences of assessing quality and describing and analyzing a centre's activities.

As Musatti and Picchio observed, "In Italian experiences, evaluating ECEC quality is considered a dynamic and continuous process, involving a plurality of stakeholders and it is aimed at analysing, discussing and improving educational practice" (2010, p. 141). Studies and research have been conducted on "perceived quality" (Bondioli & Ghedini, 2000; Ferrari, 2013; Musatti, Picchio, & Di Giandomenico, 2012; Scopelliti & Musatti, in press), the use of documentation in a participatory system of evaluation (Musatti, Picchio, & Di Giandomenico, 2014), and on valuing and evaluating the quality of ECEC for children under three years of age (Musatti, Picchio, & Di Giandomenico, 2012).

Documentation is a core of the Reggio Emilia approach to ECEC. Documentation consists of recording the children's experiences and the teachers' observations. The act of documenting serves not only children and parents, but also teachers, giving them continuous insights into the children's processes of learning and their understanding (or misunderstanding) of rules, objectives, and learning targets. From this point of view, the use of documentation can be considered a tool which helps and encourages self-evaluation among the teachers, and as a key for continuous professional improvement and renewal. In this sense, assessment is considered to be an:

> [...] action aimed at the continuous attribution of meaning and value, [and] a structuring process of the educational and administrative experience. The assessment process is part of the totality of the aspect of scholastic life, including the children's learning, the professionalism of the personnel, the organization and quality of the service. It is understood and proposed as an opportunity to recognize and to negotiate the meanings and intentionalities of the educational project and is configured as a public action of dialogue and interpretation. To this end, the infant-toddler centres and the preschools make use of specific instruments (for example: the Community Early Childhood Councils, the pedagogical coordinating team, the   coordinating team, the work group and the co-presence and core responsibility of teachers) and practices (for example: documentation, the participation of the families and of the surrounding community, participation in the integrated public system (Reggio Children, 2010, p. 14).

In conclusion, there is no relevant "traditional" research on the impact of professional development on ECEC, but there is a widely shared understanding that professional development is a vital component of educational quality. No longitudinal studies exist on the impact of professional development.

Highlights of innovative approaches

In the Italian context, to be innovative, practices should involve whole areas or networks and parents and communities, and link the acquisition of educational skills with an awareness of the cultural, social and political missions of ECEC. They should be sustainable, systemic (not episodic or realised in single centres) and exploit the possibilities offered by technology. With regard to pre-service training, there are several common elements of innovative approaches. These include collaboration and exchanges between schools and universities and strategic relationships with schools, tutors or supervisors working at the universities and in the field, through direct and indirect practices and group and individual supervision (see the above section on pre-service qualifications for a more detailed description of internships) (Falcinelli, 2011; Kanizsa & Gelati, 2010). The focus is on student group work as a tool for reflection and a multiplier of experiences. For in-service training, innovative experiences share common features such as aiming to encourage reflexive practices through teamwork (see the example provided below), exchange programmes (among nursery school services within one region and between regions), documentation/observation, bottom-up experiences of evaluation and the creation of instruments for assessing quality, teacher involvement in research and new digital technologies (video feedback). The core common idea about good (and innovative) practices is to activate educators, teachers, directors and pedagogical coordinators in participatory processes of self-evaluation, research connected to practice, documentation, work group activities and mentoring experiences.

Some examples of these themes are:

- Bottom-up research experiences based on collaboration between practitioners and researchers. The work carried out by the University of Pavia in collaboration with the ECEC services of different regions exemplifies the possibility to involve teachers, educators, coordinators, researchers and parents in a participatory process of co-creating instruments for assessing quality. The result of this participatory initiative was the creation of observation scales, self-evaluation tools, and dossiers to evaluate the quality of ECEC settings (schools, infant toddler centres, and centres for children and families). Local versions of instruments inspired by ECERS or other instruments were used as self-evaluation tools and as a way to define standards and objectives. These experiences have been carried out in several regions, including Tuscany, Emilia Romagna, Umbria, Sicily, and Puglia in collaboration with the University of Pavia, ISTC, the University of Milan-Bicocca, the University of Palermo, the University of Bari, and others.

- The system of continuing professional development involving pedagogical coordinators as multipliers and key figures in promoting teacher professional development, once again in collaboration with universities and other research institutions (ISTC, CNR, Rome). Some regions (Tuscany, Emilia-Romagna, Umbria) have established a stable and official network of coordinators, which can be considered an innovative initiative. These initiatives have been developed in some cities (Turin, Genoa, Milan, Trento, Parma, Florence, Pistoia, and so on) and some regions (Emilia Romagna and Tuscany are leading). For example, in the schools and infant toddler centres of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, the pedagogical coordination is performed by a group of *pedagogisti* who work together as a team. Each *pedagogista* coordinates a group of preschools and infant toddler centres, thus ensuring:

  [...] a consistent and unitary 0-6 educational project. The pedagogical coordinating team has the responsibility for research and innovation to constantly re-examine and update the values underlying the educational project and the duty to develop the educational choices and directions for the daily activity of the infant-toddler centres and of the preschools. The pedagogical coordinating team serve as a cultural and pedagogical link between the many

aspects of the educational project at the local, national, international level" (Municipality of Reggio Emilia, 2010, p. 17).

- In-service professional development initiatives (which began in 2007) aimed at enhancing the professionalism of teachers involved in *Sezioni Primavera* bridging classes for children aged two to three (law 89/2009). One particular project aimed at introducing training that activated changes and innovations: the training of "*Sezioni Primavera*" educators in Liguria 2010-2011. The project was done in collaboration with the Liguria Region and the University of Pavia (Bondioli & Savio, 2012).

- Some cities (e.g. Reggio Emilia, Pistoia) where professional development takes place synergistically between the staff meetings of the single preschools and infant-toddler centres and the educational and cultural opportunities provided at the local, national, and international levels. Professional development is given priority within the daily activity of the centres and schools through the reflective practices of observation and documentation, with the weekly staff meeting being the primary occasion for in-depth study and sharing. Strong connection with research is encouraged as a way to sustain professionalism among teachers.

Among the examples of promising innovative approaches to in-service professional development are:

- ECEC as a city laboratory: This interesting case is the tradition of collaboration between the Municipality of Milan and the two universities there which carry out education research (University of Milan-Bicocca and Catholic University of Milan). The aim was to create an articulated long-term plan of in-service training for nursery school educators and preschool teachers. In recent years, two major projects have been developed: a *blended training project* (on-line and in person) for teachers and educators and the project *Milano-Bambini*. This project, now in its third year, involved 70 ECEC centres in the Municipality of Milan with the following goals: the development of an articulated long-term plan of in-service training initiatives; the professional development of "coordinators" through involvement in each step of the project and through special training with and through technology; and the creation of a model and documented workshop experiences in some schools meant to become professional development poles for other schools and to create community involvement opportunities. The focus themes were chosen during a preparatory phase involving all city ECEC centres and, in some instances, parents and community members. The project also called for the setting up of a site to share experiences and documentation for professionals, families and community members. The final objective/product was the definition of the city guidelines for ECEC through a bottom-up creation process and widespread community consultation.

- Also within the city of Milan, the case of the *Nido Bambini Bicocca* is of interest for many reasons, including its connection with the pre-service training of students attending the university's courses, the role of supervisors and tutors/mentors for supporting new teachers, development and experimentation of new methods/approaches for pre-service and in-service training of new teachers, involvement in international research, and the development of a university network of infant-toddler centres.

- Another interesting case is Reggio Emilia, which has a similar tradition of close and specific collaboration between the municipality and the universities (the University of Modena and Reggio where Reggio Emilia Experts give courses). The system includes the newly established Reggio Children–Loris Malaguzzi Center International Foundation, which focuses on research, study, and development aimed at high-quality education for everyone,

along with Reggio Children S.R.L.[40]. and the infant-toddler centres and preschools of Reggio Emilia municipality. As a professional development provider, Reggio Children is accredited by the Emilia-Romagna Region for secondary education and training courses and on-going long-term professional development. Reggio Children, along with the municipal infant-toddler centres and preschools of Reggio Emilia, organises short, medium and long-term professional development initiatives on various themes and topics. Among the initiatives promoted are: professional development courses, master's degrees, summer schools, study groups, and opportunities to visit the schools and the international centre.

The programme of continuing professional development in Reggio Emilia is also exemplary in its encouragement of partnership and cooperation, not simply between colleagues but between schools and universities. Its educational project is based on a number of distinctive characteristics: the participation of families, the collegial work of all the personnel, the importance of the educational environment, the presence of the atelier (the atelier is a place of experimentation and research, particularly reactive to and in dialogue with the surrounding reality and contemporary culture, also in relation to the artistic and expressive development of the *atelierista*, who works in the atelier), the in-school kitchen, and the pedagogical coordinating team (Reggio Children, 2015).

At the macro-level, the Reggio Emilia Institutes can be considered innovative practices, whereas, at the meso-level, the role of the *pedagogisti (pedagogical-*coordinators who follows several centres) connect the ground level with the regional level. While, at the micro-level, they promote professional development initiatives with an interesting approach towards "apprenticeship" practices, when experienced teachers are temporarily displaced in new centres to start up new teams (e.g.at the infant-toddler centre and preschool San Donato in Milan).

Among the examples of in-service professional development programmes focused on developing practitioners' abilities to analyse, reflect on and further develop a knowledge-based practice are:

- The cross-cultural qualitative study ("Teacher Behaviour Analysis in Infant-Toddler Centres: Instruments and Methods for Training") involving researchers and toddler teachers in two university lab schools in Italy and the U.S. (*Nido Bambini Bicocca* and the University of Tennessee's Early Learning Center in Knoxville). The project was aimed at developing critical reflective practices from multiple viewpoints. Teachers were involved in the recursive process of analyzing tapes and discussions about their beliefs and ideas (in individual and group settings), based on the use of video as a tool to stimulate and provoke situated reflexivity processes. New methods (video, texts, recursive video-based interviews and focus group discussions, etc.) for supporting professionals (Bove, 2009; Bove, Braga, & Cescato, 2014) were developed within the project and are still under discussion (Moran, Mantovani, Bove, Braga, & Brookshire, in press). This project, originally collaborative-action research, is giving raise to initiatives of peer professional development practices through technologies.

- The action-research project entitled, "The Analysis of Children's Learning and Socialization Processes in the First Three Years of Life," which was carried out by the Human Development and Society Group of the Institute of Cognitive Sciences and Technologies, and the Municipality of Pistoia. The project was developed between the years 2006-2009 and aimed at identifying documentation procedures that could be accomplished continuously by *nido* professionals and form the basis of their collegial reflections on practice. The focus on

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[40] Reggio Children is a mixed public-private company with its headquarters in Reggio Emilia. It aims are to "manage the educational and cultural exchange initiatives between the municipal early childhood institutions of Reggio Emilia and a large number of educators and researchers from around the world", and it also carries out research on the Reggio Emilia approach. Its English-language website is www.reggiochildren.it/?lang=en.

the everyday experience of children enhanced the value assigned to the ordinary aspects of life in the *nido* rather than on specific learning or play opportunities. The analysis of children's experience over different periods highlighted the development process. The documentation was analysed and discussed by the professionals within different contexts of participation. The procedures provided the professionals with a stable framework for exercising reflexivity in order to reinforce the processes of collegiality among professionals and networking among services. In 2012 a follow-up project was renewed (see Musatti, Giovannini & Mayer, 2014).

The in-service professional development initiatives (mentioned above in this document) aimed at enhancing the professionalism of teachers involved in *Sezioni Primavera*, can be considered an example of an innovative approach to professional development because it was systemic, involving 245 educators/teachers in *Sezioni Primavera*, preschools hosting "*Sezioni Primavera*", nursery schools, schools directors, coordinators and tutors. Self-evaluation instruments were used during this project, such as ISQUEN, Self-Evaluation Tool to Assess *Nido*; and AVSI (Self-Evaluation Tool to Assess *Scuola dell'infanzia*)

Overall, the Italian early education system has built up its strength through significant investment in continuing professional development, which has always been conceived of as a process of documentation, reflection, preparation and planning work with children and families. In recent years, however, in-service initiatives for ECEC practitioners have increasingly varied and have not always been systematically organised due to the economic crisis and the decrease of funds.

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Istituto Nazionale per la Valutazione del Sistema educativo di Istruzione e formazione: http://www.invalsi.it/invalsi/index.php

Institute of Cognitive Sciences and Tecnologies & Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche: http://www.istc.cnr.it/

Opera Nazionale Montessori: http://www.operanazionalemontessori.it/

Reggio Children: http://www.reggiochildren.it/

INVALSI national evaluation system: http://www.invalsi.it/invalsi/index.php

G. Netherlands

Introductory snapshot

(Source: Central Bureau Statistics, 2015)

Children up to the age of four may attend two types of centre-based provision: day care centres for children under the age of four years, operating on a full time basis, and preschools for children between the ages of 30 months old to four years old, operating on a part time basis (usually between two and four half-days per week). In addition, non-familial home care is provided by licensed child minders, serving a smaller proportion of children under four. Right from their fourth birthday, the vast majority of children attend kindergartens in primary schools. In addition to kindergartens, a small proportion also use after school care.

The majority of professionals working with the youngest children below the age of two (93%) work in day care centres (institutions for children up to the age of four), as this sector serves a larger group of children concerning the age and opening hours. For children between two and four years old, about 50% of all professionals work in day care centres and 50% work in preschools (institutions for children between the ages of two and four).

Dutch kindergartens (institutions for children between the ages of four and six), are part of the Dutch elementary school. All public schools (6742 schools) have kindergarten classrooms.

At the end of 2012, about 50% of children under the age of four attended day care, 45% in preschool. The total attendance rate (either day care or preschool, with some overlap between the two systems) for children under the age of four was over 80%.

Compulsory education in the Netherlands starts at the age of five, and as so the attendance rate of this group of children is 100%. In the Dutch system, centre-based day care is available for children under the age of four and preschool is for children between the ages of two and four. The attendance rate is higher with older children, and for four-year-olds, attendance is between 95% and 100%. Mandatory primary school starts at the age of four, with two years of kindergarten that finish at the age of six.

Data concerning the professional careers of ECEC training graduates is not gathered by any university or by other authorities in the country.

Pre-service professional development: ECEC educators' qualification requirements, standards and resources

To work in a day care or preschool, staff must have at least an intermediate vocational education (a three- or four-year programme starting around age 16, referred to as MBO), specifically focused on care giving, social work, social pedagogical work or general youth care. Beginning in 2015, a new programme at some intermediate vocational schools will specifically target day care teachers. To become a kindergarten teacher (considered a part of primary school since 1985), students earn a bachelor's degree, with an optional specialisation in early childhood. To enter a university bachelor's degree programme, students must have completed senior general school (five years, called HAVO), pre-university education (six years, called VWO), or four years of intermediate vocational training.

For those who want to become day care or preschool teachers, preparation starts with pre-vocational education (at age 12). The four-year curriculum includes general education and also a more specific

study track, often health care or lower general education. After completion, students graduate to intermediate vocational education, and those aiming to work in ECEC usually choose three- or four-year programmes in child care, health care, social work, social pedagogy or other related fields. These programmes have a theoretical component, but at least half of the credits come from internships. Most students follow a three-year programme, but it is also possible for students to complete the programme studying part-time and working part-time. Colleges for higher vocational education also offer post-graduate programmes in day care management.

To become a kindergarten teacher, there is one teacher college (higher vocational education level, granting bachelor's degrees) students can enter, after either intermediate vocational training in social pedagogical work (four years), or after finishing a senior general education (five years, the most common pathway), or after a complete pre-university education (six years). There are also five university-based primary school teacher education master's degree programmes in the country; however, the majority of teachers follow vocational rather than academic teacher training.

The Inspectorate of Education, working in the Ministry of Education, is responsible for monitoring the quality of the education programmes in intermediate and higher vocational education. Despite this monitoring, there are concerns about ECEC teachers' pre-service training. Low teacher motivation and unclear curriculum that is often too general to equip students with the specific competences needed in ECEC both contribute to the low quality of Dutch pre- and intermediate vocational education. Drop-out rates are high. In addition, the current national discourse is focused on whether the required education level of ECEC staff should be raised to a bachelor's degree.

Characteristics of in-service professional development for ECEC educators

Numerous semi-private organisations offer post-graduate and in-service trainings such as course work, conferences and video-interaction trainings. The topics of these trainings vary widely. The Bureau Kwaliteit Kinderopvang (BKK; Office for Quality in Day Care), a semi-governmental national organisation, provides much post-graduate training and many professionalisation courses to day care teachers. There is no evaluation of the programmes' effectiveness. In addition, the private company Sardes has been contracted by the Ministry of Education to provide further training for preschool and day care teachers who work with disadvantaged children. Sardes' work has turned into a large-scale project with a budget of close to €30 million, called VVersterk, which trains thousands of teachers and includes courses, workshops, conferences, and digital support materials. The intensity of the courses is low, and an informal evaluation revealed no measureable effects.

Day care and preschool teachers working with programmes that target low-income and minority children also work with different organisations that implement training and coaching programmes related to these challenges. There are five comprehensive education programmes that have been implemented on a large scale in preschools and kindergartens that focus specifically on low-income and ethnic or language minority populations. Currently, 98% of preschools (for two- to four-year-olds) and 73% of day care centres (ages zero to two) that receive socially disadvantaged children work with one of these programmes. The largest of such programmes, used in 33% of cases, is the Dutch programme *Piramid*, which integrates nursery school and kindergarten content for three- to six-year-olds who need extra support (Helmerhorst, 2014). Internationally developed programmes such as High Scope (called *Kaleidescoop* in Dutch) are also integrated, as well as several local programmes have also been developed that focus solely on Dutch language skills. Implementation also takes place in primary schools, but at a much lower rate. In addition, the Opportunities for Development through Quality and Education (*Ontwikkelingskansen door Kwaliteit en Educatie,* OKE) Act of 2010 requested that preschools and day care centres take measures to assist social disadvantaged children, such as by implementing one of the five major programmes.

No national or local guidelines or regulations exist about which resources should go to in-service training. ECEC service providers, which can be non-profit or for-profit organisations, decide individually what their approach will be, which results in considerable variation from ECEC providers with exceptional practices to those with no trainings at all. There is an industry of semi-private and private school support services that offer all kinds of services for curriculum development, assessment, professional development and so on, and school can decide how much money they allocate to which services. There is also a national subsidy programme called *School aan Zet* that enables schools to buy services from educational support organisations. However, the programme usually funds small, one-time projects.

In-country research indicates that in-service professional development strategies are better predictors of ECEC quality than pre-service education; however, recent budget cuts have been especially detrimental to in-service professional development (Akgündüz, Jongen, Leseman & Plantenga, 2013; Leseman & Slot, 2013). There is little to no detailed evidence on promising strategies of professional development.

Despite this status quo, the national government recently sponsored the development of education programmes that are implemented in centres (preschools, kindergarten departments of primary schools, and also increasingly in day care centres), that include course work and on-the-job coaching aimed at helping teachers who work with disadvantaged students. The programme is subsidised by municipalities. On a broader level, interest has recently emerged among policy makers and service providers in viewing continuous professional development as a strategy to increase quality.

Critical reflection is not a common component in most Dutch professional development programmes, but there are exceptions. In Amsterdam and The Hague, for example, the Foundation for Pedagogy Development (*Stichting Pedagogiekontwikkeling*) runs day care centres and a preschool that take inspiration from the Reggio Emilia approach and encourage critical reflection. The Dutch programme is called Traces (*Sporen*)[41]. There are also some small-scale local initiatives attempting to implement a culture of learning (including reflective practice) in day care centres. One key private organisation, Mutant[42], supports centres in implementing reflective practices.

As far as peer resources, there are usually teacher networks at the local level, but their strength and how supportive they are depend on each municipality's level of activity. The activities can include meetings, conferences, professionalisation workshops, and so on. Day care and preschool workers don't have an official national organisation, but primary school teachers (including kindergarten teachers) have a national union. The union is not involved in professional development, however. Schools and school boards provide different kinds of professionalisation activities, usually in collaboration with other organisations.

In summary, in-service professional development is offered by a variety of public and private organisations and there are no monitoring or evaluation systems in place. Individual ECEC settings generally decide for themselves what their approach is. Critical reflection is not a major focus, but one issue, working with socially disadvantaged students and families, has prompted the creation of five programmes that are widely used in preschools and kindergartens across the country.

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[41] More information can be found on the programme's website (in Dutch), at www.pedagogiekontwikkeling.nl

[42] Mutant, run by social pedagogues Anke van Keulen and Fuusje de Graaf, is active in "respect for diversity, pedagogical quality in ECEC, child care centres as spaces for democratic practices and professionalism and learning communities". More information can be found on its website, at www.mutant.nl/en/home.htm.

ECEC educators' role, responsibility and quality concepts

For day cares for children aged zero to four, there is not a set national curriculum, but there are several broad guidelines in place. To begin, there are four general quality standards related to child development (emotional safety, developing autonomy, cognitive competences and social competences). There are also quality regulations that discuss minimum education levels and subject requirements for ECEC teachers. In targeted programmes for disadvantaged children, more specific goals on language, motor skills, and cognitive and social development are also specified. It is expected that teachers adhere to these goals.

Kindergarten (from ages four to six) and preschool, for four-year-olds, are officially part of the primary school system, so a relevant law (the Primary School Act) details "core goals" that students should achieve by age 12 (the end of primary school). These include knowledge, skills and competences. There are also related to age-appropriate developmental goals for four- to six-year-olds in language, literacy, math and social skills. For teachers working with children under six, there are also competence profiles that aspiring students should fit before entering beginning work as a teacher. These relate to the quality standards, developmental goals and educational core goals.

Quality concepts for both zero- to four-year-olds and four- to six-year-olds centre on children's emotional security. For the younger children, the concept also includes respect for the child's autonomy, authoritative child-rearing, general competence development (without speaking of specific knowledge and skills) and overall emotional wellbeing. For the older children, the learning goals are more developed and relate to the later goals of primary education.

Pre-service trainings for ECEC staff begin in intermediate vocational schools, as outlined above. Those programmes are not very specific, except for the recently developed day care teacher programmes. In those, there is a focus on the broad quality standards and implementation skills which are developed throughout the internships. For the higher vocational training programmes (for kindergarten teachers), the curriculum reflects the core goals and developmental goals outlined in the national Primary School Act.

Policy developments and reforms

The main issue under discussion is whether the government should raise the education requirements and require all ECEC staff to hold bachelor's degrees. A debated, alternative proposal is to hire more teachers with degrees, and then require a mix of teachers (those with university degrees and those with vocational degrees) to be present in centres. To shed some light on the issue, some experiments are being performed in centres currently, with published results forthcoming. The early word is that there are no effects on observed quality.

Another recent development is providing intermediate vocational pre-service training specifically for day care/preschool workers. The University of Amsterdam recently received funding to develop a day care-staff-oriented professional development programme (Helmerhorst, 2014).

To increase ECEC quality, an increasing number of policymakers and ECEC providers are discussing proposals to improve and invest in in-service trainings as a form of continuous professional development. There is also concern about day care and preschool teachers' Dutch language abilities, as many of them come from immigrant backgrounds and are not native speakers. To resolve this, some municipalities have taken it upon themselves to organise and offer special language courses and

assessments, including Amsterdam, which has provided courses in collaboration with ROCs (see below) and private institutes such as Sardes.

Budget cuts have resulted in severe cuts to day care and preschool programmes, while kindergartens, included in the primary school sector, have been relatively spared.

Quality assurance regulation, monitoring and evaluation

Generally, pre-service professional development comes from the intermediate and higher vocational educational institutions, and these are monitored for quality by the Ministry of Education. There is no monitoring system in place for in-service trainings. There are also some 60 large organisations, called *Regionale Opleidingscentra* (ROC), which are composed of schools from different levels, areas and sectors, and are publically funded by the state but governed by central boards that are relatively autonomous. State Education Acts have outlined curricula and competence profiles, for example, but schools and organisations have the freedom to determine specific content.

There are reports on the quality of ECEC (and the trends over the years) that indirectly indicate the quality of pre- and in-service professional development, showing a decreasing quality overall (since the late 1990s, after a massive expansion of the system), and especially low quality in educational perspective. There have been small-scale intervention studies involving day care teachers who were trained to improve interaction competences (indicating success regarding emotional quality, not or less regarding education quality). The ongoing pre-COOL cohort study reveals several aspects of quality in relation to pre-service education level of staff and in-service professional development (Slot, 2014). The study indicates that in-service professional development is most effective. There have also been quasi-experiments with the implementation of structured education programmes that can support ECEC teachers in preschools with a high share of disadvantaged children, indicating success in some studies, but no success in others. Despite such research, there is also no national strategy for how to improve ECEC professional development.

Highlights of innovative approaches

There is no national definition of innovative approaches and little or no detailed evidence on promising professional development strategies, because evaluations of professional development programme effectiveness are not being carried out. One example of an innovative approach can be found in the city of Utrecht, however, where researchers studied the use of observation-based feedback as input to reflective practices and teacher coaching. There are some reports of other professional development programmes based on reflective practices, but it is difficult to gauge how widespread they are. There are also reported interaction training intervention studies, which aim to improve teachers' interaction skills.

In conclusion, the report states that there is little or no evidence on promising strategies of professional development because no evaluations are available regarding their effectiveness. Recently an interest has emerged among policy makers and service providers in continuous in-service professional development as a strategy to increase quality, even as recent budget cuts decreased amounts of in-service trainings (Akgündüz, Jongen, Leseman & Plantega, 2013; Leseman & Slot, 2013). For all components of the ECEC system, there are many (semi-)private organisations that provide post-graduate and in-service training, usually through course work and conferences, or occasionally through video-interaction training. For teachers in day cares, the aforementioned organisation BKK carries out a variety of low-intensity post-graduate training projects.

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H. Norway

Introductory snapshot

(Source: Statistics Norway, 2013)

In Norway there is one unified system of early childhood care and education (ECEC) institutions for children up to the age of six. All kindergartens, both public and private, have to obey the Kindergarten Act and the Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens. There is a balance of public and private ECEC providers in terms of number of institutions (47% public versus 53% private), the number of available places in settings (52% public versus 48% in private) and the number of professionals (all staff) working in ECEC (53% public versus 47% private). In total, attendance rates of children aged one and two is 80%, and children aged three to six is 97%. Attendance rate of the youngest participants of ECEC system, children below one year of age, is on a level of 3,2%. All data are from December 2013.

Pre-service professional development: ECEC educators' qualification requirements, standards and resources

Norway's ECEC system is a unified system for children of all age groups before school entry age (6 years). The Kindergarten Act requires head teachers and pedagogical leaders (of groups/units in the institutions) to be educated kindergarten teachers. About one third of staff have this education, while about 4,200 head teachers and pedagogical leaders did not meet the educational requirements in 2011 (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research [MoE], 2013). For the rest of the staff, assistants etc., there are no legal educational requirements, but about 12% of staff in 2011 had education as child- and youth-workers from upper secondary school (MoE, 2013c).

The kindergarten teacher education is a three-year education given at universities and university colleges (bachelor degree). Entry requirement is the fulfilment of upper secondary education. Following an evaluation by the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT, 2010), the kindergarten teacher education has been renewed in 2013. The evaluation pointed to a need to strengthen the students' knowledge about education and care for children less than 3 years of age, multiculturalism and pedagogical and administrative leadership. The evaluation also found that students mostly were satisfied with their education and felt well prepared for work in kindergartens. Teaching staff at preschool teacher educations were highly experienced, but the study had low status and low priority at the universities and university colleges, also with low priority concerning funding for R&D work. Furthermore, the necessity to see the education in closer connection with the Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens was ascertained (MoE, 2006).

The new Regulation concerning Framework for the Kindergarten Teacher Education entered into force in 2013 (MoE, 2012). According to these regulations the kindergarten teacher education includes learning outcomes regarding knowledge, skills and general competencies as a foundation for pedagogical work in kindergartens and further competence development at the master's level. The candidates must have knowledge about kindergartens in Norway, including the development of the sector, the mandate of kindergartens as well as legislation and steering documents. Further the Regulation requires broad knowledge in pedagogy and the kindergarten's seven learning areas, leadership and organisation of pedagogical work and about children's play and learning, children's culture, modern childhood, diversity, children's rights, language development as well as physical and emotional development (ibid.).

In addition to theoretical knowledge, the curriculum of kindergarten teacher education provides insight into a holistic conception, where care, play and learning, as well as formation, are natural components (Educare). Children's and parents' participation is demanded in the Kindergarten Act as part of the knowledge and skills developed by students.

In the new framework for the kindergarten teacher education, 10 subjects have been replaced with six knowledge areas. Within each knowledge area academic subjects, didactics, pedagogy and practice are closely connected. Pedagogy must be part of each of the knowledge areas; it is no longer a specific subject on its own. The curricular components of the kindergarten teacher education still consist of educational theory, drama, arts and crafts, physical education, religious and ethical education, mathematics, music, natural science and environmental studies, language and social studies. However in the new kindergarten teacher education these are integrated and combined into the following knowledge areas: 'children's development, play and learning', 'society, religion and ethics', 'language, text and mathematics', 'arts, culture and creativity', 'nature, health and movement', 'leadership, cooperation and developmental work'.

A minimum of 100 days of practical training is an integral part of the education and a bachelor thesis is obligatory on the completion of the three-year course. The international perspective is strengthened and students are encouraged to engage in educational exchanges during their education.

In detail, the learning outcomes are described as follows (according to MoE, 2012, § 2):

Knowledge – the candidate:
- has knowledge about kindergartens in Norway, including the institution's character, history, social mandate, legal framework and policy documents;
- has extensive knowledge in pedagogy and in kindergarten disciplines of management and organisation of educational work and the children's play and learning;
- has extensive knowledge of how children's education takes place, as well as of contemporary childhood, children's culture, children's different upbringing, background and development of a society characterised by linguistic, social, religious, philosophical and cultural diversity;
- has extensive knowledge of children's language development, bilingualism, social, physical and creative development and emerging digital, reading, writing and math skills;
- has extensive knowledge of children's rights and on the characteristics of an inclusive, equal, health and learning kindergarten environment;
- is familiar with national and international research and development relevant for kindergarten teaching profession and is able to update her/his knowledge in the field.

Skills – the candidate:
- can use their professionalism and relevant results from R & D to lead and facilitate the child's play, wonder, learning and development and to justify their choice;
- can assess, stimulate and support various children's holistic development in cooperation with home and other relevant agencies;
- can use their approach to improvisation in play, learning and communication;
- can assess, stimulate and support children's different abilities and take into account children's different backgrounds and circumstances;
- can promote creative processes, culture- and nature experience, focusing on children's creative activity, holistic learning and experience of coping;
- can apply relevant professional tools, strategies and forms of expression in their own learning, in educational work, in cooperation with the home and relevant external agencies;
- can identify the specific needs of individual children, and on the basis of professional judgment quickly take action;

- can lead and guide employees, reflect critically on their practice and adjust it under supervision;
- can find, assess and refer to information and subject material and create material so that it highlights a problem.

General competence – the candidate:
- has knowledge of professional ethical issues, particularly relating to responsibility, respect and power perspectives;
- can plan, manage, implement, document, and reflect on the educational work related to the Content and in accordance with ethical requirements and guidelines, and based on research and experience-based knowledge;
- master the Norwegian language, both Bokmål and Nynorsk, in a qualified way in the professional context;
- can draw global, national, regional, local and multicultural perspectives, characterised by respect and tolerance, in kindergarten work;
- has change and development expertise, can lead educational development and contribute to innovation and innovation processes for future care;
- can convey key subject material orally and in writing, to participate in discussions in various fields of education and share their knowledge and experiences with others.

As the new kindergarten teacher education was introduced in 2013, there is still no evaluation. The Ministry of Education and Research (2013a) has set up a group to follow-up the education with the mandate to see if it meets the kindergartens' needs for good qualified teachers and society's need for better quality in kindergartens.

One criticism that is often referred to in academic circles is that kindergarten teachers lack adequate and current research based knowledge about development and learning as well as didactics. Teacher training is quite selective when it comes to what kind of knowledge is communicated to students. As an example, one could mention that knowledge based on quantitative and effect-oriented research on ECEC is not particularly represented in kindergarten teacher education.

On June 3, 2014, the Ministry of Education and Research announced in a press release that teacher educations, not including kindergarten teacher education, are to be extended from today's four years of study to a five-year master's degree from 2017. This decision might have influence on the economic priorities in kindergarten teacher education and competence development in the ECEC sector in the future. One might be anxious about less economic support in these areas as a five-year teacher education will require higher governmental costs, and there might be hard discussions within each university and university college about the budgets for each type of education, where the kindergarten teacher education might be the 'loser'. The municipalities as well might want to upgrade the teachers already employed. However, there might be students who do not want five years of study, but might prefer a shorter education and choose to educate themselves as kindergarten teachers, which, to a certain extent, could be a desirable development because of the lack of kindergarten teachers.

Characteristics of in-service professional development for ECEC educators

The Norwegian Government has increased the earmarked grants for recruitment and competence improvement from about 10 million NOK in 2005 to 120 million NOK in 2013 (MoE, 2013c, p. 57). Further, more than 80% of the municipalities gave their own resources for competence improvement (Rambøll, 2012).

The tendency concerning spending on professional development seems to be positive, with lots of activities. Gulbrandsen and Eliassen's (2013) mapping of quality in the ECEC sector indicates a positive development concerning improvement of competence, especially after the Ministry of Education and Research's launch of their strategy for competence in the ECEC sector 2007-2010. (Kompetanse i barnehagen – strategi for kompetanseutvikling i barnehagesektoren 2007 – 2010) The targeted group for this strategy was staff in municipal and non-municipal kindergartens. The strategy emphasised the local ECEC authorities' (municipalities) responsibility for developing and implementing plans for competence development within the national prioritised areas.

The goal of the strategy was:
- To strengthen staff's competence within the strategy's prioritised areas and the social mandate of the kindergartens laid down in the Kindergarten Act (2005) and the Framework Plan for the Content and Task of Kindergartens (MoE, 2006)
- Strengthen the role of kindergarten owners and municipalities in competence development
- Develop practice-oriented and research-based knowledge about kindergartens, in co-operation between kindergartens and relevant research institutions

The prioritised areas in the strategy were:
- Pedagogical leadership
- Children's participation
- Language environment and language stimulation
- Co-operation and coherence between kindergarten and primary school (MoE 2009a).

In 2012, 86% of the kindergartens had in-service competence development, which is quite an increase from 72% 2002.

After a long period mostly striving towards quantity goals, i.e. places for all children whose parents wanted it, all one-year-old children got a legal right to a place in 2009. During these years, the qualitative demands on the kindergartens were the same as today, but the Government did not put much effort on qualitative improvement and staff's competence development. Then in White Paper no 41 (2008-2009) *Quality in Kindergartens* the Government (MoE, 2009) presented different means to improve quality and professional development. The main strengths are a low turnover of educated staff (Gulbrandsen & Eliassen, 2013) and national strategies, while a significant weakness is the lack of educated kindergarten teachers. A more systematic approach for in-service training for professional development would be of great importance, but currently does not exist in Norway.

Similarly, ECEC staff have access to a few networks, very much on a local basis, where they can participate in more informal learning and experience exchanges. With Norway's ECEC being decentralised, there is no national overview of networks, but several county governors have set up networks on different themes, as within municipalities. The Teacher Union of Norway provides possibilities for networking, as well as two national journals, Første Steg (First Step; published by the Teacher Union[43]) and Barnehagefolk (Kindergarten-people, published by Barnehageforum[44]). These are forums where debates and discussions on professional development can take place.

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[43] For more information, see (in Norwegian) www.utdanningsforbundet.no/Fagtidsskrift/Forste-steg/Arkiv/

[44] For more information, see (in Norwegian) www.barnehageforum.no/Magazine.aspx?magazineid=1

ECEC educators' role, responsibility and quality concepts

The Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens (MoE, 2006) emphasises that the educational work in Norwegian kindergartens is based on a tradition of dialogue, curiosity and exploration. The kindergarten teachers are trained to see children in a holistic way, they have to be concerned about children's interests and use these interests in pedagogical situations in everyday life. The development of children's basic competence involves strengthening their social competence and communication skills in a broad sense. Children's learning takes place through their play, but also in more organised and structured situations. Learning is characterised by the dissemination of culture and learning of curriculum content. In kindergarten, children shall be offered experience and learning in seven learning areas [45]. The ways of working in kindergartens are grounded in topic-based multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary conception of knowledge, which allows considerable room for play and spontaneous activity. Each of the seven learning areas has goals to be worked towards and demands on the staff in order to work towards these goals. While the goals for the children are formulated in terms of possible experiences, the demands to the teachers are much more action-oriented meaning the creation of experiential spaces and activities that guarantee that children will get the intended experiences.

The Kindergarten Act (2005) states that head teachers and pedagogical leaders must be educated kindergarten teachers or similar. Regulations say there should be one kindergarten teacher per 7-9 children under the age of three and per 14-18 over the age of three. Further, the Act demands that staff must be sufficient to carry out a satisfactory pedagogical programme.

The new kindergarten teacher education is clearly linked to the 'curriculum' for the kindergartens (MoE, 2006).

The quality concept is defined in the Kindergarten Act (2005) and the Framework Plan. According to the Kindergarten Act, kindergartens shall, in collaboration and close understanding with the home, safeguard the children's need for care and play, and promote learning and formation as a basis for an all-round development. The Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens defines childhood as a phase of life with intrinsic value; kindergartens must be inclusive fellowships with space for each child. All kindergartens must work goal-oriented with children's development and learning, and stimulate children's linguistic and social competence.

The values of Norway's Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens are based on fundamental values in the Christian and humanist heritage and tradition. Values upon which the plan is based include empathy, forgiveness, and belief in human worth, equality, common responsibility, honesty and fairness. Kindergartens in Norway should also promote human dignity, equality, intellectual freedom, tolerance, health, sustainable development and respect for the environment. Further, the children have a legal right to express their views on the day-to-day activities of the kindergarten.

According to the Kindergarten Act, the municipalities have the responsibility to ensure that kindergartens for Sami (Norway's indigenous people) children in Sami districts are based on Sami language and culture, and to ensure that Sami children in all municipalities can secure and develop their language and culture.

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[45] Learning areas: Communication, language and text; Body, movement and health; Art, culture and creativity; Nature, environment and technology; Ethics, religion and philosophy; Local community and society; Numbers, spaces and shapes.

The issue of professionalisation and profession in ECEC is a very relevant topic in Norway (e.g. Bjerkestrand & Pålerud, 2014; Høier, 2012; Solbrekke & Östrem, 2011; Vågan & Havnes, 2013, Haug, 2010). Haug (2010) and co-workers have conducted the study 'MAFAL – Sharing of work in kindergarten – Mastering of the role as preschool teacher in a layman like work'. The study finds great agreements concerning the tasks of preschool teachers and assistants. The sharing of tasks are hardly presented on tasks like daily care etc., but more visible on typical leading tasks who require specific pedagogical efforts like special education, preparation for school for five-year-olds and cooperation with parents. He claims this might indicate that the kindergarten does not give prestige for formal and abstract tasks, and that preschool teacher students are socialised into the established structure within kindergartens, where staff and opening hours require equality of work between the different groups of staff. Solbrekke and Östrem (2011) discuss how:

> […] professional practice has been influenced by a changed policy in the Nordic context. Drawing on data from an evaluation of the implementation of the 'Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens', we argue that there is a movement from the social pedagogy tradition of Nordic kindergartens to an increased orientation towards concern for language testing and preparing for school. This change is discussed in light of a theoretical model illustrating the different logics of professional knowledge and moral reasoning on the one hand and the accountability understood as an obligation to answer to external demands on the other. We conclude by identifying the dilemmas that may arise in the tensions between responsibility and accountability (p. 194).

In their article 'Research based kindergarten teacher education' Vågan and Havnes (2013) design a perspective on research-based kindergarten teacher education that to a larger extent than before lay the foundation for the specifics of the profession and the potential the student active learning activities have on qualification for the professional work. They discuss the possibilities and limitations of the research based future kindergarten education. They state that an important requisite for development and qualification not only is the kindergarten teacher education's staff and their research competence and activity, but also the importance of methods of learning and working.

Höier (2012) conducted a formative evaluation of a project on the kindergarten teachers' 30 credits further education in the theme 'Norwegian as a second language'. She looked at how this education influenced the interaction among staff with different educational backgrounds to find the prerequisites for developing a common knowledge base for the pedagogical work. She concluded that the work in kindergarten needed a solid foundation with the responsibility of the head teacher to involve the whole staff, sometimes by taking unpopular decisions. The individual kindergarten teacher's need for this education was not sufficient to change practice.

In another recent study, it was found that graduates experienced, just to a very limited extent, that they were part of reciprocal learning processes at their new workplaces. This was related to the tension between a horizontal and a vertical discourse in kindergartens; between the newly graduates pedagogical duties towards the children and towards the assistants as well as towards the development of their agent competency and "commentator competency" (Eik, 2014).

Policy developments and reforms

In White Paper No 24 (2012 - 2013) *Kindergartens of the Future* (MoE, 2013b) the former Norwegian Government (Stoltenberg II) stated that staff's competence is the most important factor to secure children's development and thriving, and pointed out the fact that this is a main finding in international research on ECEC quality and stated in reports from public commissions and earlier white papers. The current Government (Solberg) is of the same opinion. Lack of qualified kindergarten teachers is a great challenge, about 4,200 head teachers and pedagogical leaders do not

have the education required. A systematic work among all stakeholders to recruit and retain qualified staff is of high importance, the same is the work to improve all staff's competence to keep them updated to be able to implement the curriculum and renew their practice. The Norwegian Union of Teachers wants a larger proportion of educated kindergarten teachers in the kindergartens while the Government have considered first to meet today's requirement, to establish a system for competence development in the sector and continue the campaign for recruitment to the kindergarten teacher education, within this campaign also to recruit persons with the Sami language.

Quality assurance regulation, monitoring and evaluation

There is no statutory requirement for private owners to invest in in-service training, but most of them do, often in collaboration with the municipalities as local ECEC authorities. The Government provides earmarked grants to support professional development within policy-related areas, e.g. introduction of ECEC curriculum, language development, etc. These governmental funds are often administrated by the County Governors (regional state authorities) who also are responsible for quality assurance and "inspection" of the local municipalities.

Demands and requests of the staff are taken into account when it comes to plan initiatives concerning professional development by the owners of the ECEC institutions (local municipalities; private owners). Language development is an issue that many municipalities, who own approximately 50 per cent of the ECEC institutions have been particularly concerned with in recent years. Larger private owners often have their own department for professional development. However, municipalities are not obliged to have persons with specific ECEC-competency among their administrative staff.

There is no specific regulation or monitoring system of professional development. In accordance with the Kindergarten Act the County Governors (state authority at the regional level) are obliged to supervise or carry out inspections of the municipalities to ensure they are carrying out their legal obligations. The municipalities must supervise both municipal and non-municipal kindergartens. Supervision might e.g. be carried out by examining the kindergarten's annual pedagogical plans to see if they are in accordance with the Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens, make visits to see if there are enough qualified staff or if the premises are in accordance with current legislation.

In the 2005 (and earlier 1995) Act on Universities and University Colleges, it is stated that university colleges offering teacher education and other higher education should provide continuing and in-service training. It is a priority for the national education authorities to stimulate to greater involvement. The County Governors co-operate with universities and university colleges about competence improvement in the ECEC sector[46].

Responsibility for in-service training for teachers at the national level lies with:

- The Ministry of Education and Research: Financing (in the yearly government budgets), instruction of the Directorate for Education and Training, establish goals and strategies
- The Directorate for Education and Training: Implementation by instructions to the County Governors in accordance with ministerial instructions

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[46] See an example (in Norwegian) from Hedmark University College at, www.hihm.no/utdanning/studietilbud/skole-og-barnehage/videreutdanning-for-fagarbeidere-i-barnehagen and an example (in Norwegian) from Oslo and Akershus University College www.blogg.hioa.no/veiledernettverket/2015/01/19/veiledningssatsning-barnehager-nordre-aker-bydel/

- The universities and other teacher education institutions: Co-operate with Country Governors in making courses etc. for ECEC staff.

In-service training and continuing education courses are organised at local, regional and national levels. The organisers may be local education authorities, teachers' associations, associations for special subjects in higher education institutions, regional officer's educational departments, County Education Committees, national councils or national education authorities.

In addition to the implementation of the new kindergarten teacher education, the most recent political initiative from the Ministry of Education and Research is a new national strategy to raise the competence in kindergartens 2014-2020 (MoE, 2013c). This strategy aims at designing a systematic plan for raising the formal competence of all staff. Taking the starting point of each staff it sets out to providing in-service training and courses as stepping-stones in a continuous effort to strengthen professionalisation in the kindergartens. It aims to provide career paths, qualifying people within the sector – not qualifying them out of it.

As an example ECEC assistants with no formal education who are nevertheless working in ECEC, can be offered introductory courses on a lower level, subsequent in-service training, more in-depth courses, studies on vocational upper secondary level and ultimately a choice between a newly developed vocational specialist training or the academic path to a kindergarten teacher training. Corresponding paths have also been designed for already skilled child- and youth-care workers, other types of educators with a tertiary degree working in kindergartens, kindergarten teachers/pedagogical leaders, or head teachers. The Ministry will be offering mentoring to all newly educated kindergarten teachers during the first year coming into work.

Trained kindergarten teachers/pedagogical leaders are offered training in leading pedagogical developmental work or further education in relevant topics such as multilingual development, special needs or other. The aim is to educate them as mentors. Trained as mentors they will be providing opportunities for all staff to have better in-service training developing a reflective pedagogical practice and better quality on the work of the kindergarten.

For head teachers, 5 universities/university colleges with partners have been assigned by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training to offer a leadership education over 1 ½ years, 30 credit points (ECTS) to 300 head teachers at a time. Similar programmes are available to head teachers in schools. The leadership-education is designed to be part of master's degree studies.

A number of universities/university colleges that offer kindergarten teacher education, also offer master's degree in Early Childhood Education and Care. Lifting professionalism even further, a national school for teacher educators in pedagogical research will increase the number of doctorates and subsequently, research in the sector.

The roles and responsibility of different actors in the sector might present a challenge, and efforts must ensure that all actors engage and co-operate. The kindergarten owners are responsible for recruiting staff with the required competence – as both head teachers, pedagogical leaders and other staff. The municipalities, the regional and national authorities allocate resources to supplement the owners and staff, ensuring a quality level for all provisions. The recruitment to different educational measures and the feasibility depend on the staff's possibility to participate. Crucial, is also the training institutions' (universities/university colleges) ability to meet the demand in the field, both in terms of content and design: such as combinations of on-site and campus training, mentoring and mentored networks, collaborative studies and cooperation on Research and Development projects.

The strategy supports in-service training, further education and developmental work in kindergartens within four broad themes:

- Formation and inclusiveness (multiculturalism)
- A good language environment for all children
- Pedagogical work for children with special needs
- Pedagogical leadership

An important result in Gulbrandsen (2008) was that kindergarten teachers were the most stable group of staff in Norwegian kindergartens, while earlier the unskilled staff was more stable.

A former national strategy (2007-2010), established by the Ministry of Education and Research for the recruitment of kindergarten teachers was evaluated by Rambøll (2012). The conclusion was that the strategy had been successful. The ECEC sector experienced the means as relevant and useful, and the evaluators recommended continuation of the means and an increase in the use of them.

A workplace-based kindergarten teacher education is well acknowledged in the sector (Rambøll, 2012). Here, kindergarten assistants can be educated to kindergarten teachers combined with work in the kindergarten where they have their daily work, and the kindergartens are largely integrated as a learning area. This educational programme recruits persons with long-time, relevant experience. It is Internet-based, with some gatherings at the university colleges during the studies. This means that the students do not have to move to the place where the university college is located.

Rambøll (2012) also mentions that systematic guidance and follow-ups of newly educated kindergarten teachers is of importance to keep them working in kindergartens. This arrangement is rooted in an agreement of 2009 on cooperation between the Organisation of Local and Regional Authorities and the Ministry of Education and Research (MoE). A survey (TNS Gallup 2012) showed that 63 per cent of newly educated kindergarten teachers receive this guidance. Both the kindergarten owners, the head teachers and the newly educated were content. In a recently defended PhD-thesis, Eik (2014) presented interesting findings from a follow-up study of beginners in the kindergarten teacher profession that are highly relevant for kindergarten teacher training. New kindergarten teachers experienced shortly after their graduation that they mastered the pedagogical/educational part of their job and they demonstrated qualities of improvisation and professional judgment, but had still difficult to describe, analyse and evaluate the educational work. The graduates experienced most challenges in terms of being the leader of (none trained) staff in their unit, but had troubles to describe and analyse these challenges.

Highlights of innovative approaches

Systems/reforms: As shown above, the Ministry of Education and Research has initiated research for developmental work and professionalism in kindergartens and for improving the connection between the research environments and the kindergartens. As one of the critical points in Norwegian kindergarten teachers is the lack of an adequate scientific basis and especially updated scientific knowledge about development and learning and didactics, the Ministry has decided to strengthen the relationship between theory and practice by increasing resources for research and developmental work (R&D). It means to provide lecturers with better knowledge of the ECEC field, while at the same time ensuring a more solid research-based and coherent professional education, thus strengthening the relationship between theory and practice.

Resources: Allocations to ECEC research was tripled in the period 2006 -2009, from 36 to 117 million NOK (MoE, 2013b).

Examples of innovative programmes: Two programmes of Educational Research are reported as examples of promising strategies to rethink policies and practices in the sector of ECEC. These

programmes are aimed at knowing the system and building new policies and strategies to meet the needs of children and their teachers.

- **Example 1**: A database developed of the Danish Clearinghouse for Educational Research in collaboration with Danish, Swedish and Norwegian national authorities[47]; The aim of this Scandinavian initiative is to link research and practice and to disseminate research to the kindergarten sector, contributing to the development of research-based practices in kindergartens;

- **Example 2:** Programmes under the Norwegian Research Council, such as *The Programme for Practice-based Educational Research* (PRAKUT) (2010-2014) and *the Programme for Educational Research* (UTDANNING 2020) (The Research Council of Norway, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2015a, 2015b) are seen as promising programmes for research and professional education and practice.
    o The first one has the goal to enhance the quality of learning in ECEC, in primary and secondary schools. Initiated by the Norwegian Ministry of Education aims to enhance teacher education programmes and to ensure a better link between professional education and professional practice (through the implementation of research-based knowledge in the practice-field) (2010-2014).
    o The second one conducts research on the education sector from kindergarten to doctoral level education. The programme seeks to enhance the research and knowledge based for policymaking and professional education and practice. Preliminary results from UTDANNING 2020 show that Norwegian teacher education "is fragmented and lacking professional orientation" (The Research Council of Norway, 2012a, 2012b, 2015b).

- **Example 3**: Dissemination of research to the kindergarten sector is also vital. In this sense, in cooperation with the Danish Institute for Evaluation in Education, Norway and Sweden's national authorities have established a database with Scandinavian Research on ECEC[48]. Documentation and dissemination are seen as basis for reflection and learning.

Briefly, in Norway, the Ministry of Education and Research (in collaboration with some research centres) supports research programmes on early childhood education and care (ECEC), and teacher education and practice. Allocation to ECEC research has tripled since 2006. The need for research on the effects of quality in ECEC on children's outcomes prompted the Minister of Education in Norway to allocate an extra NOK 20 million to a project under the Programme of Educational Research: *Better provision for Norway's children in ECEC: A study of children's well-being and development in ECEC, and new tool for Quality Evaluation* (2012-2017).

Preliminary results of these research programmes show the need to bridge the gap between theory and practice in teacher training. Among the examples of innovative strategies for professional development are: a database and two programmes with the aim to link research and practice and to disseminate research to the kindergarten sector (the database was built in collaboration from Norway and Sweden's national authorities). The goal is to contribute to the development of research-based practices in kindergartens.

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[47] For further information, see www.nb-ecec.no/skandinavisk-forskning-pa-dagtilbudsomradet-en?set_language=en

[48] For further information, see www.nb-ecec.no/skandinavisk-forskning-pa-dagtilbudsomradet-en?set_language=en

Some key-innovative strategies include:

- the interplay between theory and field experience in teacher education,
- a better link between research and practice,
- the dissemination of research to the kindergarten sector,
- the introduction of reflexive writing and new writing formats in teacher's education,
- documentation and dissemination are seen as bases for reflection and learning.

Finally, there are some ongoing longitudinal project in Norway that will contribute to new knowledge and a renewal of practices, including:

- The Stavanger project "The Learning Child"[49]
- The Behaviour Outlook Norwegian Developmental Study (BONDS)[50]
- Better Provision of Norway`s children in Early Childhood Education and Care (BePro)[51]
- Early confident in Trondheim - A longitudinal population-based study of risk and protective factors for children's mental health[52]

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[49] More information can be obtained at http://lesesenteret.uis.no/research/article10712-3352.html

[50] More information can be obtained at http://www.barnssosialeutvikling.no/barnehageundersoekelsen/category627.html

[51] More information can be obtained at http://www.hioa.no/Forskning-og-utvikling/Hva-forsker-HiOA-paa/FoU-ved-LUI/Better-Provision-for-Norway-s-children-in-ECEC

[52] More information can be obtained at http://www.ntnu.no/rkbu/tidlig-trygg-i-trondheim

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I. Poland

Introductory snapshot

In Poland there are various types of public and private institutions providing Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) for children, grouped by ages zero to three years old and three to five/six years old. Different legal acts regulate professional requirements of staff working with children in both age ranges.

There is a significant difference in the number of professionals working by age groupings, as the number of settings for children aged zero to three years old is almost fifteen times lower (1,511 settings in the whole country) than for children aged three to six years old (about 21,500 settings[53] in the whole country). In 2013 there were 56,000 available places in settings providing ECEC for children aged up to three years old and 1,330,611 places for children between the ages of three and six[54]. In 2013 only 5.7% of children attended ECEC, but the situation is improving, as in 2010 this figure was only 2.6%. The number of settings and available places for children, in comparison to demands from parents, is still one of the most important reasons for the low attendance rate of children aged zero to three years. This indicates that there is a strong need for qualified care providers working with the youngest children. The attendance rate of children aged three to five is significantly higher and is on the level of 75%. In both age groupings, the attendance rate is increasing. The supply of qualified teachers if sufficient regarding the demands, or even there are more teachers in the job market than it is required.

Pre-service professional development:
ECEC educators' qualification requirements,
standards and resources

In Poland, qualification standards are grouped by children age groups, namely: 1) settings providing ECEC for children from 20 weeks old to three years of age; and 2) setting for children between the ages of three and five/six. From September 2014, children in Poland start primary school at the age of six. The two kinds of ECEC provisions are supervised by different Ministries and ECEC provider qualification requirements in both age groupings are regulated by different legal acts.

In provisions for children up to three years of age

For the first group of ECEC providers, working with children form 20 weeks of age to 3 years of age, pre-service requirements are upheld by the *Act of 4 February 2011 on the care for children under the age of 3*. The provision of care might take on any one of the following forms:

1. nurseries (crčches);
2. kids clubs (day care centres);

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[53] Different organisational forms for children between the ages of three and six (preschools, pre-primary sections of primary school, pre-primary points, pre-primary education groups).

[54] Children of three years of age may attend settings for for children under the age of three (creche day care centres) or settings for children between the ages of three and six (preschool).

3.   day care providers (individual day care providers);
4.   nannies.

Settings may be established and organised by gminas (municipalities), private individuals or corporations/organisations, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Caregivers in nurseries (crèches) and kids clubs (day care centres) must hold the qualification of nurse, midwife, childminder, kindergarten teacher, lower primary school teacher, or school counsellor. They may also be individuals with a high secondary (12 years of education) school and: 1) a minimum of two years' experience of working with children under the age of three; or 2) have 280 hours of training prior to employment, "of which at least 80 hours [have been] in the form of practical activities consisting in providing childcare while being supervised by" care providers who hold a full qualification. Caregivers and educators who do not possess such qualifications prior to their employment must complete 80 hours of training within their first six months of employment as ECEC providers. Individual day care providers must have accomplished 160 hours of training or 40 hours of supplemental training to formal qualifications (i.e. nurse, midwife, childminder, kindergarten teacher, lower primary school teacher or school counsellor) including first-aid training for children. Also, volunteers who do not hold any formal qualification are obliged to complete 40 hours of training prior to their start date of service (Article 17 of the *Act of 4 of February 2011*).

Detailed programmes and courses for pre-service training and qualification must be approved by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy but generally cover the following areas:

1.   first-aid provision for babies and children
2.   psycho-pedagogical bases of development
3.   comprehensive development of a child
4.   development of a young child
5.   competences of a caregiver
6.   methods of coping with stress and solving problems
7.   innovative methods of stimulating a child's development
8.   practical training

To note, there are a limited number of academics working and specialising in the field of pre-service ECEC training for children up to the ages of three, though there are new programmes being created at colleges and universities, such as the bachelor's degree programme at the Faculty of Education at the University of Warsaw[55].

In provisions for children aged three to five/six

For the second group of ECEC staff, educators working with children between the ages of three and six, pre-service requirements are upheld by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. They must hold a bachelor's (three years of higher education) or master's degree (two years of higher education beyond a bachelor's study) in the field of early childhood education. Those who hold degrees in other fields of study must accomplish two years of higher education in the field of ECEC or postgraduate studies in the field of ECEC

Entry requirements for candidates who want to start pre-service teacher training depend on the level of education they have completed. This may include a high school diploma (to start a bachelor's in teachers' training) or a bachelor's (for a master's degree of study) or a master's degree (to start post graduate studies). Candidates for teachers' education and qualification are prepared simultaneously to be kindergarten teachers (ECEC for children between the ages of three and five/six) and lower

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[55] For more inromation, see http://www.pedagog.uw.edu.pl//ENGLISH/english.php?id=2395

primary school teachers (I-III grades of primary school). Basic pre-service training consists of three modules:

- Variation of classes, provides knowledge and skills for teaching Polish as a language, mathematics and science;
- Psychological and pedagogical knowledge covering different aspects of child development, the role of play, child safety, cooperation with parents and the environment, developmental disorders, adaptation processes and school readiness. The minimum of hours of training for general psychological and pedagogical preparation is 90 hours and 60 hours for psychological and pedagogical preparation for work with young children (kindergarten and lower primary school);
- Didactic methods, including core curriculum, modern concepts of education of children, planning of educational processes, individualisation of teaching, developing school readiness, work with a child with learning difficulties, methods of teaching Polish, and any foreign language, Mathematics, Music, Arts and Crafts, Science, Sports and Computers. The study of the bases of didactics requires a minimum of 30 hours. The study of the didactics of individual subject areas requires a minimum of 90 hours and practical training consists of a minimum of 120 hours.

Pre-service full-time training is organised and managed by a variety of providers (public or private) as mentioned earlier and is free of charge at public colleges and public universities (through public funding). For part-time pre-service (external) and post-graduate studies at public colleges and universities, and private institutions (colleges and universities), public financing is not available and studies are therefore, 100% funded by students. There are exceptions where some pre-service courses can be co-financed or financed entirely through grants. At the same time, the three-year colleges (*Kolegia nauczycielskie,* for example http://www.kolegium.waw.pl/), specialising in preparing teachers for ECEC at a bachelor's level, are in the process of being closed down.

Characteristics of in-service professional development for ECEC educators

In provisions for children up to three years of age

In-service training offer for caregivers of children under the age of three is currently very narrow. An example of training may be courses provided by the Commenius Foundation in Warsaw[56]. At the same time there is an increased interest in educare of practitioners and parents, who are becoming more aware of the importance of its good quality. The prove of this tendency maybe the high number of parents participating in evaluation of care givers work through "super żłobki" (super crèches) survey[57]. Participation in in-service professional development relies on the individual initiative of professionals or heads of ECEC settings.

In provisions for children aged three to five/six

As mentioned earlier, for children aged three to five/six, ECEC providers must undertake pre-service training that simultaneously prepares them for work as preschool teachers and lower primary school teachers (with children 3-9 years of age). Participation in in-service training continues to be

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[56] For more information, see www. instytutkomenskiego.pl/index.php/szkolenia-doskonalce-dla-osob-pracujcych-z-maymi-dziemi

[57] For more information on the super crèches, see http://www.zlobki.waw.pl/aktualnosci.php?pid=21569

unregulated, though there is a growing awareness of the necessity of continuous professional development among practitioners and parents. Funding secured for in-service training of all teachers (preschool, primary school, secondary school, high school) on the municipal level must equal 1% of planned annual expenditures on teachers' salaries while on voivodeship level[58] and national level funding must equal to 5,000 average trainee[59] salaries each. As this funding then gets distributed to ECEC centres and providers nationally, it then becomes up to the heads of those providing entities to decide on how to allocate those funds to in-service staff training. Private entities are in most cases excluded from such funds. Notably, there are institutions which organise different professional training for teachers, that are financed or co-financed by the European Union[60].

The content of in-service training and education is largely unregulated and is rather designed by provider organisations than according to teachers' needs. Participation in in-service training is not obligatory, but is often required for professional promotions. Training may take place in a variety of setting, including private organisations/firms[61] providing in-service teacher training.

ECEC educators' role, responsibility and quality concepts

In provisions for children up to three years of age

The legal acts governing provisions for children up to the age of three give general information of what are the role and responsibilities of care and education providers. Article 10 (Ustawa z dnia 4 lutego 2011 o opiece nad dziećmi w wieku do lat 3 z kolejnymi zmianami *[Act of 4, February 2011 on the care of children under the age of 3, with further changes])* states that:

> "The tasks of a nursery and the kids club shall include in particular:
> 1. ensuring that the child is taken care of under the living conditions that are similar to those at home;
> 2. guaranteeing appropriate care and education through play-as-you-learn activities, taking individual needs of the child into account;
> 3. organising upbringing and educational activities, taking the child's psychomotor development into account and adjusted to the age of the child." Additionally Article 19. states that "Care providers working in a nursery or kids club shall cooperate with the parents of the children attending such nursery or kids club, in particular through consultations and advisory services provided for parents with regard to work with children."

In terms of child-care provider ratio in crèches, one ECEC staff may work with no more than eight children, or up to a maximum of five children in cases when a disabled child or special needs child is under his or her care. Children can stay up to a total of ten hours per day in the care of their ECEC provider (in specific situations, this may be longer). These rules also apply to kids clubs, through children may only attend for up to five hours per day.

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[58] The highest-level administrative subdivision of Poland, corresponding to a "province" in many other countries.

[59] The lowest level of teacher professional development.

[60] For example: *Wdrażanie podstawy programowej kształcenia ogólnego w przedszkolach i szkołach* (the Centre for Education Development). More information can be be found at
www.ore.edu.pl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5483:planuj-dziaaj-badaj-zmieniaj&catid=243:wpp-ii-aktualnoci-projektowe&Itemid=1711

[61] An example of an institution is Studium Doskonalenia Kadr Oświatowych. More information can be found at
www.sdk.edu.pl/dla_nauczycieli_przedszkoli.php

In provisions for children aged three to five/six

The regulation specifies a ratio of one teacher to 25 children in public settings In private settings there are likely to be fewer children per ECEC staff member. For ECEC staff who work with children aged three or more, there are a number of legal acts that regulate their role, responsibilities and qualifications, the main ones being:

1. *Karta Nauczyciela* (Teacher's Charter of the 26th of January, 1982 – this is the main national legal act regulating the rights and obligations of teachers) with its further changes;
2. *Podstawa programowa wychowania przeszkolnego z dnia 23 grudnia 2008 roku* (National Curriculum Framework of Preschool Education of the 23rd of December, 2008) with its further changes;
3. and, *Ustawa o systemie oświaty z 7 września 1991* (Act on the Education System of the 7th of September, 1991) with its further changes.

These documents, in varying degrees, refer to the implementation of the National Curriculum Framework for children between the ages of three and six, yet the concept of "quality" of standards does not appear explicitly. According to the regulations, teachers and ECEC staff are obliged to fulfil, in a reliable way, all of the responsibilities resulting from the position of a teacher and functions of a preschool, which includes among others the implementation of the National Curriculum Framework. Prior to the commencement of the school year, ECEC staff must chose the curriculum (at this stage, the pedagogical board, head teacher and other teachers have to analyse the curriculum in terms of its compatibility with the National Curriculum Framework); during the school year, they must document their work; are obliged to prepare different kind of records including attendance record, medical records, food programme records (children with special diets), background information, programme documentation, teacher's weekly and yearly activities documentation, behavioural observation, and psycho-pedagogical diagnosis of children with behavioural problems at the end of every school year. They must also write a report regarding the implementation of the curriculum.

ECEC staff's work is evaluated by heads of ECEC units who are obliged to monitor, among other things, the implementation of the chosen curriculum (individually and internally to the ECEC unit), based on the National Curriculum Framework. In practice, teachers and ECEC caregivers have access to ready-made curriculum, prepared by specialists (such as highly educated teachers, pedagogues, pedagogical advisors and academics)[62]. These curricula are published by a variety of organisations but generally, it is up to teachers and heads of settings to decide on which curriculum best suits the children they work with.

Policy developments and reforms

The whole of Poland's higher education system has undergone change in light of the EU's Bologna Process. This has therefore affected also Poland's ECEC system pre-service professional development and ongoing training at the college/university level, including[63]:

- ECTS (European Credit Transfer System);
- implementation of clear and comparable degrees through implementation of the supplement of the diploma;

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[62] For example, www.ore.edu.pl/index.php?option=com_phocadownload&view=category&id=61:szeciolatek-w-szkole&Itemid=1648

[63] For the full text, see www.nauka.gov.pl/proces-bolonski/proces-bolonski.html

- implementation of two/three stages educational systems (bachelor level/master level/PhD level);
- promotion of students, academics and staff of colleges, universities mobility;
- promotion of European cooperation, in terms of improving the quality of higher education system;
- promotion of European higher education, in particular in the areas of professional development, mobility and integrated in-service and pre-service training programmes and research.

In provisions for children up to three years of age

The most notable policy development came in 2011 when the field of ECEC for younger children was transferred from the Ministry of Health to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in Poland. With this shift came the introduction of new legislation, namely, the *Act of 4 February 2011 on the care for children under the age of 3*. This change has been well received by the academic community and is a formal evidence of a structured acknowledgement of the importance of ECEC for the very young. Crèches used to have the status of health care facility and functioned according to such relevant requirements, as with other medical institutions, in the areas of organisation, staff qualifications, financing and supervision. The act regulating work in crèches was *Ustawa z dnia 30 sierpnia 1991 r. o zakładach opieki zdrowotnej (Dz. U. z 2007 r. Nr 14, poz. 89, z późn. zm.),* and stated that crèches were to provide medical prevention and care for children up to three years of age. The new legal act broadens the role of these settings and states that ECEC settings are primarily there to provide care, but also upbringing and education.

As the legal act is relatively new, there are no reviews, evaluations, longitudinal studies or intervention studies that have looked at the impact of professional development of care givers on the quality of ECEC care and child outcomes.

In provisions for children aged three to five/six

An important step was taken by the Ministry of National Education in 2012 when among other changes obligatory preparation for using foreign language was introduced to the National Curriculum Framework This new regulation caused new requirements toward preschool teachers, who must up to the year of 2020 broaden their professional competences in the area of methodology of teaching foreign language to young learners..

One of the very important negative issue which could be mentioned here is lack of current research findings concerning the influence of different aspects of teachers` professional development on the development of children, they work with.

Quality assurance regulation, monitoring and evaluation

In provisions for children up to three years of age

Regarding professional development in specific training for care givers, the only regulation that assures the quality of professional preparedness of staff is through the accreditation of training programmes by The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (legal bases).

Article 48 *of the Act of 4 February,* stipulates that:

1. The plans of trainings referred to in Article 16(2)(2) and Article 16(3), Article 17(2) and Article 39(1)(6) shall be approved by the minister competent for family matters for the period of five years upon the request of the entity organising the training.
2. The training plans shall be approved or denied approval by way of an administrative decision.
3. The list of the training plans referred to in Paragraph 1 above shall be published in the Public Information Bulletin.

Article 49 of the Act of 4 February 2011 stipulates that the minister competent for family matters shall specify, by way of an ordinance, the scope of training plans, taking into account the specific nature of the caring, the upbringing and the educational tasks of the nursery, kids club and day care provider, considering the need to ensure appropriate performance of such tasks.

Colleges and universities providing pre-service training are effectively monitored by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education.

There is no obligation for care givers to participate in in-service training. Since the profession of ECEC staff for young children under the age of three is relatively new i.e. falling under the new *Act of 4 February 2011 on the care for children under the age of 3*, there are still ongoing consultations with stakeholders in the matters of quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation, supervised by municipal representatives.

In provisions for children aged three to five/six

The work of all institutions providing pre-service training (level of higher education; colleges, universities) is evaluated in various ways:

- internal - groups of experts evaluate different aspects of departmental work (observation of lecturers, students opinions, etc.)
- external - national ranks of institutions, among them, teaching departments (indicators like number of academics, publications, etc.)

The Polish Accreditation Committee (Polska Komisja Akredytacyjna) designated by the Ministry of Sciences and Higher Education is a board responsible for the evaluation of higher education schools (public and private). Their evaluation consists of various aspects in relation to the functioning of faculties, among others, those providing teachers' training. To note, however, is that there are no reviews, evaluations, longitudinal studies or intervention studies regarding the impact of professional development on quality and/or child outcomes for ECEC staff for children under the age of six.

The report prepared by the ORE[64], *Wzmocnienie systemu wspierania rozwoju szkół ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem doskonalenia nauczycieli i doradztwa metodycznego 2010* (Strengthening the system to support the development of schools with particular emphasis on teacher in-service training and consulting methodology 2010), gathers information in relation to ECEC professional development – however it covers teachers (of children over the age of three) only and not the totality of ECEC staff and care providers. Preschool education teachers work on the same legal bases as school and high school teachers. The report presents data concerning issues of in-service professional development of all teachers.

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[64] Ośrodek Rozwoju Edukacji (Centre for Education Development affiliated to the Ministry of National Education). For more information, see www.ore.edu.pl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=422&Itemid=1

The first part of the report reviews the system of in-service professional education and training support and broaches upon the subjects of legal regulations, quality assurance, pedagogical and psychological advisory, financing of professional development, and the organisation of a system. The second part of the report analyses the strengths and weaknesses of available support for in-service professional development, founded on previous analysis and reports. Among the weaknesses, report mentioned:

1. inefficient cooperation among training centres and settings;
2. weak autonomy for heads of settings, which also influences teachers' work;
3. lack of clear rules of cooperation between bodies governing ECEC provision (i.e. ministries, voivodship superintendents, representatives of municipalities);
4. lack of mechanisms assuring good quality of in-service training;
5. bureaucratic, administrative, financial and organisational barriers.

Among the strengths, the report presents the following points: a large amount of institutions providing in-service programmes, so there is a wide variety of choice and financial guarantees.

Accreditation procedures for institutions providing in-service training for ECEC staff who care for children over the age of three is governed by the Regulation of the *Minister of National Education* and *Sport (Act of 20th of December 2003 concerning accreditation of entities providing in-service.* Accreditation is granted by superintendents (voivodship level), following a positive evaluation of training provision. Evaluations are conducted by teams of experts in the field of teacher professional development, appointed by superintendents. Along with the requirements concerning staff qualifications there are others, including:

1. experience in conducting at least three training programmes, containing differential forms and activities in total, for a minimum of 1,500 hours (preparation of programmes, implementation and evaluation);
2. self-evaluation of work (in the period of time
3. charter of the organisation.

Overall, there are about 400 public and private institutions around the country providing in-service training for preschool, primary school, mid-school and high school teachers (System Informacji Oświatowej, SIO base, January 2010)[65], each offering a variety and some close to 100 different training programmes. Both the public and private provision of in-service training are supervised by superintendents, as mentioned, who equally have the right to withdraw accreditation. In 2009 (five years after the implementation of the Act) 9% of in-service providers (7% public and 2% private) had obtained accreditation, but 91% of entities (15% public and 76% private) did not have the accreditation. Acquiring the accreditation is not obligatory, and as the requirements for it are strict; therefore a relatively few number of entities apply for it.

There are programmes being offered to teachers of children three year of age and older, but still, there are no complex in-service programmes focusing on ECEC practitioner competences to analyse, reflect on and further develop knowledge-based practice through professional development. As a whole, professional development is typically an individual endeavour.

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[65] System Informacji Oświatowej (System of Education Information). For more information, see www.sio.men.gov.pl

Highlights of innovative approaches

There is no specific or legal definition for innovative approach in regard to the professional development of ECEC staff in Poland. Nevertheless, there are some prominent examples that indeed represent innovation, insofar as they encompass the following characteristics:

- authors of the concepts (academics with "strong" pedagogical background; experienced academics in pedagogical training)
- complexity of programme content (programmes focusing not on chosen domains of the pedagogical work, but on the holistic way/approach towards training)
- uniqueness of the programmes regarding national offer
- timing/duration/range (i.e. programmes that are still operating, aren't too new so that several groups of professionals have already undertaken the training, and that changes have occurred at work, in a long-term perspective)
- opinions and belief of professionals who participated in the training (very good reception of programmes).

In addition to this, the examples provided below are a reflection of and have been influenced by the official definition of *pedagogical innovation*, by the Ministry of Education, including pedagogical innovations implemented by teachers at preschools and schools. Though the definition does not explicitly address professional development, indirectly it does in terms of "*Innovation* - novel curriculum, structural or methodological solutions, aimed at improving quality of work." Following this, passing resolutions to implement an innovation is up to the Teachers' Board (internal structure of institutions - all teachers). It also requires the opinion of the Parents' Board (internal structure of institutions - representative of all parents), an agreement of teachers implementing the innovation and written agreements of an innovation's author/authors (when the innovation is not published).

Innovation implementation may commence only after securing required staff and conditions necessary for its implementation. Innovation that requires additional financial support can be implemented only after receiving written agreement from the local authority for financing. Importantly, all pupils should have access to the institution or to the group in which the innovation is implemented, on regular bases. Following this however, participation in the implementation of an innovation is up to the teacher

Innovations cannot violate children's rights for free education, upbringing and care, nor their rights for developing the knowledge and skills they require in order to complete examinations for instance (regulated more specifically in other documents). .

Notably, innovations vary in terms of characteristics from experiments, explicitly denoted in the Ministry of Education's act. An experiment is defined as *work aimed at increasing efficiency of education, by modifying conditions, organisation of educational activities or curriculum under the supervision of scientific unit*. They also end with an evaluation of effects.

For our first example of innovation in ECEC staff professional development, Professor Lucyna Telka from the University of Łódź initiated a cooperation with the public crèche network in the year 2000. Her research has elaborated on a number of practical solutions concerning the daily work of caregivers. She has presented the Łódź crèche network's processes through her monograph, "Przekształcanie przestrzeni społecznej", articles and reports. Among the initiatives that have been undertaken, following new approaches introduced in cooperation with the Professor Telka are:

1. The application of demands for poll research by the head of public crèches in Łódź;
2. The presence of a researcher in 31 crèches, process of integration with staff, running institutional diaries;

3. Analyses of chosen aspects of crèches' work; children's pictures, free play, organised activities;
4. Critical and overall analyses of the concept of work;
5. The preparation of didactic play scripts, with respect to experiences of caregivers that are valuable and uniform in terms of implementation in different crèche;
6. The execution of the first national seminar, "Accompanying the child in his/her development" in 2003;
7. A project of transformation of educational conceptualisations in crèches, an intensification of meetings concerning educational aspects of crèches' work with caregivers and pedagogues cooperating with them;
8. An elaboration of pedagogical projects by every participant in the researched crèches;
9. National seminars in 2006, 2009, and 2012;
10. The implementation of changes in internal regulations in terms of caregiver obligations;
11. Participation of the heads of crèches in the discussion on the first legal act concerning work of crèches/day care centres;
12. In 2013, the concept of young child educator-caregiver appears for the first time in legal regulations
   (https://opolska.policja.gov.pl/SKZ/pdf/21_234202_wychowawca_malego_dziecka.pdf);
13. Analyses of caregivers' work after the implementation of the innovation (master degree papers);
14. Ongoing cooperation with respect to the implementation of pedagogical aims.

Regarding the content of in-service training, there is an innovative approach example proposed by Professor Bronisław Rocławski, who is an author of a licensed method called *Glottodydaktyka*[66].

> "The educational system by Professor Bronisław Rocławski, enables that every each and every child masters reading and writing in a friendly and creative atmosphere. Main assumptions of language education include among others outstanding child's diagnosis, beginning from the spoken language, improvement of the speech through development of speech organs and breathing exercises, full realization of the sound and letter world..... The method covers a wide range of teaching aids for children, teachers and parents, including the use of LOGO BLOCKS©, designed for fun and learning Polish, English and Mathematics. In 2001, Glottispol established the MODEN Teacher Training Centre, responsible for teacher training and development" (Glottispol, 2015).

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[66] "Glottispol" (English translation), see www.glottispol.pl/index.php?lang=en

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4, February 2011 on the care of children under the age of 3, with futher changes).

J. Portugal

Introductory snapshot[67]

In Portugal there are public and private units providing educational care for children, grouped by ages zero to three years old and three to five/six years old. Pre-service training requirements, however, are the same for staff working in the whole Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector. For infants (i.e. classrooms serving children under 1 year) Training requirements are different (a master's degree in ECEC is not required).

The number of professionals working with children in the public sector is 9,545, providing education and care for 143,584 children. In the private sector, numbers are slightly lower, at 7,594 professionals employed for 123,082 children. However, the number of public settings (1,862) is slightly lower than in the private public sector (1,900). The attendance rate for children under the age of three years old is almost two times lower (46.2%) than for children of preschool age (88.5%).

Pre-service professional development: ECEC educators' qualification requirements, standards and resources

Portugal's ECEC system is split into two parts: crèche (zero to three years old) and preschool (three to five years old). Educators at both levels must hold a master's degree for groups of children above one year of age, but not for infants. Both groups of educators are offered in-service trainings (as will be addressed below). Although pre-service trainings and professional qualifications are standard for all ECEC settings, work conditions, salaries and professional status vary widely between public and private sectors (OECD, 2005).

Crèche workers' qualification requirements are decided by the Ministry of Solidarity, Employment and Social Security. Each crèche has a mixture of trained teachers and assistants, and one trained teacher and one assistant teacher are required to lead groups of children aged one to three. Teachers must hold master's degrees in early childhood education, or educational or social sciences, while assistants are required to have completed secondary school and have finished a 180-hour training course (the course is relatively new; until 2008, assistants only needed to have graduated from secondary school[68]).

For the preschool system, which serves children aged three to five, teachers must also have master's degrees.

Students can attend teacher training colleges (part of polytechnic institutes), private teacher training colleges or universities. To enrol in one of these programmes, students must have completed upper secondary school, for a total of 12 years of schooling, and have passed a national exam. The national

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[67] Source *Educação em Números: Portugal 2014* (School Year 2012/2013), available at http://www.dgeec.mec.pt/np4/96/%7B$clientServletPath%7D/?newsId=145&fileName=DGEEC_DSEE_DEEBS_2014_EducacaoEmNumeros.pdf

[68] For more information, see (in Portuguese) www.dgaep.gov.pt/upload/Legis/2008_dl_121_11_07.pdf and (in Portuguese) https://dre.pt/application/dir/pdf1sdip/2004/07/177A00/48984914.pdf

government decides the entry requirements, programme duration, credit calculations, academic and professional qualifications, and so on (Law No. 46/86[69] and DL No. 43-2007[70]).

Preschool teaching programmes last between four and four-and-a-half years (graduates of the longer programme are eligible to teach both in preschools and primary schools). Courses in the first three years total 180 credits, and the last 12-18 months add up to equal a master's degree. These pre-service training programmes must include courses on general education topics as well as ECEC-specific courses. They are not, however, required to discuss national curriculum guidelines.

The Ministry of Education has tried to design a system in which teacher training programmes for teachers of 0-12-year-olds have curricula that facilitate smooth transitions between the different educational levels (DL No. 43 2007). The content requirements for preschool teachers and 1st- and 2nd-grade primary school teachers are similarly structured, for example, with both programmes requiring 30 credits of Portuguese language, 30 of math, 30 of experimental sciences and social studies and 30 of artistic expression.

This curriculum alignment, in combination with Bologna Process reforms, has resulted in a reduction in the number of credits offered for specifically ECEC-related topics such as child psychology and childhood pedagogy. A decrease of 12.5% to 14.6% in the time devoted to students teaching in schools has also occurred (Formosinho & Formosinho, 2008). This decrease has been criticised in academic circles.

Internships are mandatory in pre-service trainings and should include observation, supervised practice, planning and assessment and experience in all education levels specific to the programme, as well as promote a reflexive practice that helps new teachers adapt to the challenges of the profession. In recent years, however, the length of the internship has been shortened, prompting critics to note the increasing academisation of teacher training (Formosinho & Formosinho, 2008).

Interestingly, those teaching in the public sector have the same pay and working conditions as primary school teachers, but those in the private sector often have lower pay and worse conditions (OECD, 2006).

Characteristics of in-service professional development for ECEC educators

In-service requirements are the same for all teachers from the preschool level through secondary schools. However, most of the in-service trainings are not specifically designed for early childhood education (Formosinho & Formosinho, 2008). The OECD has also found that Portuguese preschool teachers have little support when it comes to classroom management and leadership (Taguma et al., 2012).

All in-service training programmes are regulated at the national level, but the topics target local needs as well as national ones, at all different grade levels. Funding for professional development comes from the national government and the European Social Fund (ESF). PRODEP (Programa de Desenvolvimento Educativo para Portugal), a programme created with the help of the ESF[71], also

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[69] Full text is available at http://www.dges.mctes.pt/NR/rdonlyres/2A5E978A-0D63-4D4E-9812-46C28BA831BB/1126/L4686.pdf

[70] Full text is available at http://www.dges.mctes.pt/NR/rdonlyres/84F15CC8-5CE1-4D50-93CF-C56752370C8F/1139/DL432007.pdf

[71] The Community Support Framework, at www.qca.pt/home/index.asp

funded the construction of training centres. Currently, however, Portugal is one of four countries identified by Eurydice (2013) as suffering a decrease in nationally organised continuing professional development activities and corresponding financial support. Budget cuts have also affected teacher salaries.

Public preschool teachers have to attend at least 50 hours of training every four years, but since the crisis, career advancement has stalled. Educational assistants are also provided with ongoing training through courses or modules (OECD, 2005). Recently, there has been a movement toward more customised trainings that focus on particular school levels and teachers' demands. For example, professional development systems are addressing issues of socially disadvantaged children and families as well as immigrant groups through dispersed training initiatives. Teachers from public ECEC, working in Priority Intervention Educational Territories[72] may have access to additional (more systematic) training resources, dependent, however, on the goals and strategies included in the Improvement Plan designed by the board of their individual school grouping.

In terms of professional networks, ECEC professionals in Portugal may choose to become members of APEI[73], the Portuguese Association of Early Childhood Education Professionals. Membership entitles professionals to receiving ECEC-related journals and information (including training opportunities). Further, @rcaComum[74] is an online ibero-American community for preschool education professionals that can be considered a community of practice (see Pinto, 2009[75]). Moreover, within particular educational movements and frameworks, such as the Modern School Movement (Movimento da Escola Moderna[76]), ECEC staff can also join particular networks, including cooperative training systems.

Overall, education funding has decreased as a result of the crisis, including money for teacher attendance in professional development activities and teacher salaries (Eurydice, 2013). This is likely to negatively affect quality, even as policymakers seek to smooth the transitions between different educational levels. This emphasis on aligning the teacher qualifications so that those teaching at different levels graduate with similar academic backgrounds has resulted in a decrease in ECEC-specific courses during pre-service trainings, and a shortening of pre-service internship requirements.

ECEC educators' role, responsibility and quality concepts

The Framework Law of Pre-School Education (Law 5/97, INCM, 1997) defines preschool education quality criteria for all educational contexts of both the public and the private sectors. Criteria include defining the objectives of childhood education, and the application of common rules related to curriculum, staff qualification, opening hours, quality of buildings, equipment, and materials, and adult/children ratios. Portugal's national curriculum guidelines for preschools is composed of broad, overarching principles with which teachers are expected to create their own curricula after considering their own settings and students. The guidelines emphasise teachers' autonomy and responsibility. Career statutes for ECEC teachers underscore their active, empowered position in the educational

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[72] For more information, see www.dgidc.min-edu.pt/teip

[73] For more information, see www.apei.pt

[74] For more information, see www.arcacomum.pt and the facebook page at www.facebook.com/arcacomum?fref=ts

[75] At http://repositorium.sdum.uminho.pt/handle/1822/12571 and Miranda-Pinto, M., Osório, A. J. (2010). Colaboración y aprendizaje en el ciberespacio. @rcacomum: comunidad de práctica iberoamericana de educadores de infancia. *Revista Mexicana de Investigación Educativa, 44*(15), 35-64.

[76] For more information, see http://www.movimentoescolamoderna.pt

process, which allows them the autonomy to manage the learning process and adapt teaching methodologies as they see fit (Diário da República, 2005). The national Teachers Career Statute also outlines such points as the rights and responsibilities of all teachers and the basics of performance evaluations.

The official profile for early childhood teachers, as outlined in statute DL 241 2001, outlines which strategies and activities teachers should use in their classrooms. More specifically, it says that teachers should create curricula, materials, learning environments and positive relationships that contribute to stimulating and diverse learning experiences. This profile is also discussed in pre-service training programmes. Officially and legally, there is an expectation of teacher excellence (Diário da República, 2005).

Policy developments and reforms

As mentioned earlier, recent policy developments in Portugal centre on a closer alignment between early childhood education and primary education. In 2011, for example, the Ministry of Education began promoting stronger coordination between the two levels, moving ECEC settings into schools and encouraging whole-school planning and collaboration on shared projects. The ministry also placed renewed emphasis on planning students' transitions from preschool to primary school (Taguma et al., 2012). Also in 2011, new requirements for crèche staff qualifications came into effect. Specifically, it is now required that there be one teacher and one assistant per group of children above the age of one.

The trend toward more closely aligning pre-service curricula for early childhood and basic education dates back to 2007 and the Bologna reforms. However, there has been a decrease in professional development funding, which began in 2011 (Eurydice, 2013).

Quality assurance regulation, monitoring and evaluation

The responsibility for continuous professional development lies with several authorities, including the Ministry of Education and Science, scientific centres, local training centres and training centres of specific school associations. Training courses and workshops are accredited by a national organisation, the Scientific-Pedagogical Council on Professional Development[77], and they can be planned by single organisations or several schools working together. The management and administration for the trainings and training centres are carried out by the general directorate of school administration. The General Inspectorate of Education and Science (IGEC) is responsible for evaluating all professional development efforts (DL 22 2014[78]), but in 2006 the OECD characterised the quality control efforts as weak, pointing out a lack of inspectors specialised in ECEC (OECD, 2006). The IGEC's assessment programme includes visits, observation and monitoring the educational activities of the schools and centres, aiming to encourage improvement in these settings. In the private sector, in 2013 and 2014, IGEC conducted an assessment programme that involved 76 private non-profit centres (6%; IGEC, 2014). In the public sector, all schools were assessed within a period of 5 years, from 2006 and 2011 (Grupo de Trabalho para a Avaliação Externa das Escolas, 2011).

Two studies are reported regarding the impact of professional development on quality and/or child outcomes: in Pessanha et al. (2007) it was found that better-paid teachers provided better toddler child

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[77] For more information, see www.ccpfc.uminho.pt

[78] For more information, see www.ccpfc.uminho.pt/uploads/RJFCP%20DL22.2014.pdf

care quality. The other study (Barros et al., 2010) found that professional status was statistically significantly associated with overall child care quality, although it did not remain a significant predictor after controlling for a number of structural quality indicators.

Highlights of innovative approaches

Innovative practices in in-service professional training in ECEC in Portugal, can be considered as context-based training practices that support continuous (i.e., over time) teacher critical reflection (Lino, 2005, p. 86). Innovative in-service professional training is provided in the context of collaborative consultation and/or supervision and/or in the context of communities of practice that support teacher connectedness and reflectiveness. At the moment, however, there is still a wide gap in terms of evidence supporting innovative practices.

The Portuguese ECEC field faces several challenges. It does not have a specific, standardised definition of quality to follow, and only a few in-service opportunities are specifically designed for ECEC needs (Formosinho & Formosinho, 2008). In addition, as mentioned above, there is little cited support for preschool teachers on classroom leadership and management (Taguma et al., 2012), and the field is suffering from an overall decrease in financial support for teachers' attendance at professional development activities. Teachers' salaries have also been directly affected by the economic crisis (Eurydice, 2013).

Despite these circumstances, two examples of innovative approaches have emerged: the Modern School Movement and the Developing Quality in Partnerships programme.

The Portuguese Modern School Movement[79] is the product of a continuous process of reflection and practical innovation by teachers at various levels over several years. In this model, professional development is performed largely through collaborative work between teachers. Regular meetings are important in this model, so that teachers can reflect on and share about their own personal experiences (Folque & Siraj-Blatchford, 2003).

Developing Quality in Partnerships[80] specifically targets preschools. This programme takes its inspiration from the English Effective Early Learning Project (EEL) project devised by Christine Pascal and Tony Bertram in 1997[81]. In this project, teachers were supported in implementing and evaluating a programme that compared the quality of various ECEC settings. Researchers relied on collaborative partnerships with teachers and ECEC staff to carry out the work, and the resulting information about good classroom practices has been published with the help of the Ministry of Education in a series of booklets in 2008.

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[79] For more information, see www.movimentoescolamoderna.pt

[80] For more information, see www.dgidc.min-edu.pt/educacaoinfancia/data/.../manual_dqp.pdf

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[82] Additional information by the same author can be obtained at www.uav.ro/jour/index.php/jpe/article/view/410

III. Synthesis of individual country analyses

This section is the direct outcome of WP3's cross-country analysis on the six themes applied in the individual country analysis in part II. We therefore present insights and reflections on a theme-by-theme basis, namely: Theme 1: Pre-service professional development: ECEC educators' qualification requirements, standards and resources; Theme 2: Characteristics of in-service professional development for ECEC educators; Theme 3: ECEC educators' role, responsibility and quality concepts; Theme 4: Policy developments and reforms; Theme 5: Quality assurance regulation, monitoring and evaluation; and, Theme 6: Innovative approaches. In addition to these six themes, we found an emerging focus on three specific points from our comparative and aggregated analysis: Additional insight 1: Reflection in practice; Additional insight 2: ECEC and the vulnerable; and, Additional insight 3: Professional development networks and communities of practice.

Framing these are the initial research questions WP3 set out:

1. Are countries' policies and professional development systems (pre-service and in-service) aimed at strengthening educational attainment and competence development among ECEC staff likely to lead to improved professional competences in meeting the range of demands and challenges of today's societies?
2. To what extent are professional development systems responding to increasing expectations that ECEC staff are able to identify and implement standards for high-quality services and meet children's needs, both in general and for the most vulnerable?
3. Which conditions (e.g. resources, policy and local authorities' prioritisation of high-level services) are provided for professional competence development (pre-service) and for sustainable workforce development (in-service), and to what extent are innovative approaches to ECEC systems under development in CARE's participating European countries?

As expounded on, the examples provided by countries not only demonstrate the impact that structural and processual shifts have on European ECEC quality and child development in terms of professional development. They underscore how innovative practices can play a significant role towards a sustained renewal of practice that can respond to the challenges of our changing societies.

We begin with some cross-country observations of ECEC settings by examining the introductory snapshots

Introductory snapshots

The introductory snapshots provide us with a glimpse into the overall organisation of ECEC in each of the countries participating in this study. This backdrop may well help explain some of ECEC's professional development features in terms of qualifications, reforms, resources, and focus for innovative activity. For instance, there are large differences in attendance rates across Europe. In Poland, we have seen that 5.7% of children up to the age of three participate in ECEC, and 75% of children over three years of age participate. In Norway, by contrast, attendance rates are very high: 85% of children under the age of three and 97% of children over the age of three participate in ECEC. Although the numbers do not tell the story of why attendance and participation rates are so different, they might indicate important disparities in registration records (national, regional, etc.), access to ECEC, ECEC opportunities, prioritisation of ECEC and life opportunities for the young, political strategies on lifelong learning, and parental engagement in ECEC systems. These are all issues that are worth exploring in greater depth, as a complement to the analyses presented under each of the six themes below.

Further to this, the snapshots illustrate large variations in terms of private and public provisions of ECEC, which also impacts investment capacity for professional development and ECEC activity in general. For instance, in Greece the private sector provides for only 7% of children enrolled in ECEC, employing only 4% of all ECEC staff. As a result, the main employer and guardian of ECEC is the public sector. On the other hand we have Portugal (50%-50%), Norway (47%-53%) and Italy (43%-57%) whose ECEC provisions are relatively balanced between public and private, respectively. What is more, the governance and administration of ECEC can also depend on this public-private distribution and on the age group of children. For example, Ministries of Health and Welfare or of the Interior or of Education can be designated authorities, and accordingly, various understandings of the role and priorities of ECEC develop; for instance, emphasis on the 'educational' aspects of ECEC can be affected. In Italy, preschools (*scuole dell'infanzia*) for children aged three to six are governed by national governments, while nursery schools for children under the age of three fall under the jurisdiction of municipalities. In turn, this affects stakeholder involvement, standards and priorities, as well as processes for ECEC as a whole, and the professional development of ECEC staff in particular.

Such differences, therefore, provide context surrounding ECEC systems across Europe and, although statistics provide but a snapshot of the current situation, the analytical themes presented below provide evidence as to the state of affairs, heavily influenced, or at least framed, by varying national contexts. In striving towards high quality ECEC, there is a need to include context-specific information, particularly when seeking to identify best practices. The figures presented in the snapshots demonstrate a generally high level of ECEC activity in Europe, and, in turn, this underlines the importance of a continued focus on ECEC systems and comparative, best practices studies, such as those undertaken through the CARE project.

Against this backdrop, we will present our aggregated, cross-country analysis for the six themes used in the individual country-specific analyses. Our results will highlight a renewed awareness across Europe of the importance of ECEC professional development practices and processes for advances towards high-quality ECEC.

Theme 1: Pre-service professional development: ECEC educators' qualification requirements, standards and resources

Two main findings emerge from our cross-country analysis on this theme. The first is an increasing academisation of ECEC staff, and the second is that curriculum underscores competence development on a theoretical level and through practice-based methods. Both of these tendencies can enable high-quality ECEC professional development, but can also potentially undermine the ultimate goal of strengthening child outcomes, as will be discussed in the following.

The first result we glean from the country reports is that there is a clear trend towards the academisation of ECEC staff's pre-service professional development, in some areas driven by the Bologna Process' (2007) effects, particularly with respect to university degree and vocational college qualifications. However, such academisation is not necessarily tantamount to an unambiguous upgrading of the competences of future ECEC staff. For example, Portugal aligned all its pre-service curricula, in combination with Bologna Process reforms, which resulted in less time devoted to student-teaching and a decrease in ECEC-related offerings, such as studies in child psychology and childhood pedagogy. In Poland, regulated pre-service education has also become increasingly academic with narrowed offerings. Polish ECEC staff are now obliged to obtain qualifications in "preparation for learning a contemporary foreign language" by 2020, also demonstrating the system's outward-looking, international vision for ECEC. In Greece, vocational training is mandatory for ECEC staff in child care centres; four years of pre-service training for educators and two years for assistants, while kindergarten teachers must achieve a bachelor's level qualification. In Finland, one in three day care staff per classroom or child group must hold a bachelor's or master's degree in education, or alternatively a bachelor's degree in social sciences. Teachers in Portugal's crèches (zero to two years old) and preschools (three to five years old) must hold a master's degree. And in England, professional qualification is mandated nationally – so as to uphold standards vertically and horizontally – and this follows strict accreditation legislation that is regularly assessed by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). In the Netherlands, ECEC staff must hold an intermediate vocational education qualification (a three- or four-year programme) as a minimum, specifically focused on care giving, social work, social pedagogical work or general youth care. However, despite the vocational requirement, there are reports of low teacher motivation and an unclear curriculum contributing to a lower quality of pre- and intermediate vocational education and high drop-out rates. As a result, Dutch national discourses are currently debating the question of raising pre-service requirements to a bachelor's degree, or hiring more teachers who hold degrees to then require a certain distribution of degree-holding ECEC staff per ECEC setting (as seen in Bauchmüller, R., Gørtz, M., & Rasmussen, 2014; and Melhuish at al., in press).

Altogether, these divergent examples tell the story of a tendency towards greater academisation and greater distribution of formally educated and non-educated staff within ECEC. However as research shows (ibid.) there are great differences between ECEC settings with educated and non-educated staff in terms of quality, and thereby child outcomes (see also Datta Gupta & Simonsen, 2014).

In some countries, pre-service qualifications are not nationally defined. Italy presents a good example of this, whereby Italian regions govern qualification levels for ECEC staff. Since 2010, however, teachers in preschools (*scuola dell'infanzia*) have been required to obtain a five-year university degree, also qualifying them to teach in primary schools. Nevertheless, a new Italian bill that aims at unifying the ECEC system attempts to determine new national standards, including a bachelor's qualification for all ECEC educators (of all children, from birth to six years of age), reflecting the same trend as seen in the countries mentioned above. One of the debates that surfaced in Italy, for instance, both as a catalyst and as a result of ECEC staff academisation, concerns the potential over-qualification of staff working

with children aged three to six, and under-qualification of staff working with children up to the age of three.

The debate surrounding under- and over-qualification is one that is relevant in every country. Indeed, what is the optimal level of pre-service education for ECEC staff? There is evidence of links between a high level of formal education among staff and a high level of child achievement (Bauchmüller, Gørtz, & Rasmussen, 2014). Yet at the same time, high qualification pre-service training includes reflection and a holistic development that goes beyond a focus on theory. Over-qualification and specialisation could lead to a shift in 'care' for children towards discipline-oriented education and a focus on didactics, may also become undermined.

Some countries have reported the opposite trend, such as in Germany, where a precipitous expansion in ECEC settings meant the country had to find new ways of coping with shortages in ECEC staff. Hence, several German states have implemented "transfer or career change policies" that can help widen the ECEC workforce, in effect lowering qualification requirements for ECEC staff.

Altogether, these examples demonstrate that formal, pre-service, academic qualifications are generally on the rise, with some exceptions, for various socio-economic and political reasons. However, this tendency has ignited some controversies which put into question the relationships between higher qualification and better structural and processual ECEC quality and overall ECEC child outcome quality. There is ample improvement to be made in terms of evidence-based research to more concretely align such relationships (Slot et al., 2014).

Further to this, the content of pre-service qualifications often emphasises confidence in practicing ECEC and principles of self-reflected methods that accentuate a comprehensive approach to ECEC education. For example, Finland's curriculum underscores teaching children agency, autonomous thinking, self-confidence, and self-respect. It is the aim of the University of Jyväskylä that its students within the field of ECEC become autonomous, self-reflective, and ethically responsible educators with a strong research foundation. The university promotes a dialogical learning environment, whereby students and teachers collaborate in learning encounters and research projects. In Norway, pre-service education encompasses a minimum of 100 days of practical training and six knowledge areas that include didactics, pedagogy and practice: children's development, play and learning; society, religion and ethics; language, text and mathematics; arts, culture and creativity; nature, health and movement; and, leadership, cooperation and developmental work. An emphasis on play by using nature is an example of Danish pre-service curriculum content that focuses on competence goals. ECEC students are to use nature as well as cultural media and other forms of expression to create developmental and learning processes, by incorporating children's perspectives into play and pedagogical activities.

Therefore, the second insight we can gain from the European country reports on pre-service professional development is that curriculum content underscores competence development, linked to both theoretical knowledge and practice-based methods. By highlighting reflective approaches in knowledge areas, ECEC pre-service education accentuates the responsible role of the ECEC educator in both caring for and educating children. One additional insight, or question rather, relates to the inclusion of practical experience in pre-service qualification: not all countries contributing to this report noted such experience as mandatory, and where this was specified as mandatory, internship periods and methods were widely varied, as for instance between Norway's 100 days (minimum) of practical training and Poland's requirement of mid-school education (280 hours) plus 80 hours of practical training (for ECEC educators of children aged up to three).

As we have seen in more recent studies, the importance of a well-educated ECEC workforce, of staff who develop competences necessary to implement the curricula in their countries (see D2.1 'Overview of European ECEC Curricula and Curriculum Template', Sylva et al., 2015), pre-service qualifications are not enough to enable educators to see beyond the pre-descriptions of curricula, early learning goals,

guidelines and programmes as also found by Early et al. (2007). Professionals in the ECEC systems can no longer afford to merely acquire specific specialised knowledge and skills – they have to develop competences that allow them to apply knowledge and skills in a renewal of practice which is then constantly adapted to the situation and the specific children in the day care setting and their families (OECD, 2012). In this way, the challenges identified in our research questions can be met; namely, strengthening educational attainment and competence development that leads to improved competence in meeting the challenges of today's ECEC; pre-service education that leads to meeting the needs of children in general and the most vulnerable in particular; and pre-service training in theories and practices that lead to innovative approaches. Related to Theme 4, the enhancement of staff qualifications is emphasised and discussed in several countries, which reflects a demand and also a need for more academisation in the ECEC system, and which in turn reflects how the role of ECEC educator has been established formally, through legislation, and more informally, through practice. Overall, however, there is still an important need for empirical evidence that clearly demonstrates a positive link between academisation, quality improvement, and the impact on child outcomes.

Theme 2: Characteristics of in-service professional development for ECEC educators

In contrast to pre-service qualification (vocational and academic), we see an enormous range in mandates and offerings across Europe regarding in-service professional development. There are vast differences in terms of resources and regulation concerning in-service training. Two main trends can be identified. The first is one that puts the individual at the centre, making the ECEC educator responsible for seeking out relevant ECEC-enhancing training, as well as locating resources including time and finances. The other trend is that local or national authorities mandate and provide support for ongoing training.

If we examine the first of these trends, in Poland for instance, there are a broad range of possibilities for in-service training, but these are seldom regulated and individual ECEC educators initiate their own in-service training trajectories. Similarly, in England, there are only very limited grants available for professional development, although professional associations have begun taking on the functions of training by providing workshops, seminars and online courses. In Germany, there are a growing number of private, independent training and professional development programmes entering the market (Lindeboom & Buiskool, 2013), which promotes uneven in-service training opportunities and development. In Denmark, there is a marked difference between the well-organised and well-developed pre-service education and training (reformed in 2014), and a neglected in-service training system, which is also largely self-organised, with few resources (budget and time), and lacking long-term frameworks. In the Netherlands, there are numerous semi-private organisations offering post-graduate and in-service training, although training topics vary widely.

Turning to the second of these trends, we have seen that some countries mandate ongoing professional development, though again, opportunities are uneven and dependent on resources and educational priorities. For example, ECEC professional development is considered so important in Norway that the government increased investment into training from 10 million NOK in 2005 to 120 million NOK in 2013 with a strategy to have 86% participation in 2012. In Finland, the approach is somewhat more restrained. ECEC staff are entitled to participate in in-service training each year (Children's Day Care Act, 1973), with somewhere between three and ten days per year set aside for in-service training (Social Welfare Act 50/2005). Nevertheless, there is no unified national system for professional development in Finland, but mandatory in-service training, designed and administered by national bodies, is free. Such courses are organised by, for example, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Finnish National Board of Education, or professional organisations such as the Association of Kindergarten Teachers in Finland. In Greece, in-service training for kindergarten teachers is

compulsory when changes in policies (e.g. reforms) and/or practices (e.g. new technologies) emerge. In these cases, training is organised by the Ministry of Education. ECEC staff who do not hold a teaching certificate in Greece, however, have few chances for professional development when compared to those who are certified. In public ECEC settings, the type and extent of in-service training depends on individual municipalities' social-educational policy and available resources. Similarly, in Portugal, in-service training is organised nationally, though training topics target local needs (as well as national ones). Funding is provided by the national government and the European Social Fund (ESF).

On the topic of funding for ECEC professional development, with one strong exception noted earlier (Norway), coverage has generally decreased, as also noted by Eurydice (2014). However, what this has prompted, in some cases, is greater private and semi-private market activity for in-service training, as exemplified by the variety of offerings and providers, and new strategies that strengthen linkages with research institutes, for instance. To take Italy as an example, some municipalities have forged connections with universities and research centres such as the Institute of Cognitive Sciences and Technologies or the National Research Council, or have set up project-specific professional development opportunities. These complement, or perhaps counter-balance, the effects of diminishing public funding and resources that have typically been provided through the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research.

An important contemporary discussion concerns the need to facilitate children's learning and wellbeing through further investments in in-service professional development programmes that systematically renew and enable educators to improve the quality of services (see I. Introduction of this report). As shown in the individual country analyses, there are only a few examples of large-scale national initiatives – e.g. the international project from Norway, 'Better provisions for Norway's children in ECEC' (Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus, 2013) and the study from England, 'Effective provision of preschool education' (Sylva et al., 2004a, 2004b) – as well as a few studies of in-service professional development programmes e.g. the VIDA Programme in Denmark (Jensen, 2014), where the Ministry of Social Affairs funded newer approaches to in-service professional development programmes in selected municipalities. Such studies explore evidence in the interplay between pre-service and in-service professional development as a predictor for ECEC quality and child outcomes.

Overall, we see two directions with respect to in-service training: in some cases with substantial government-mandated support, and in other, more common, cases poorly funded, self-organised and unevenly assessed. From the Netherlands, we find research indicating that in-service professional development strategies are stronger predictors of ECEC quality than pre-service education (Akgündüz, Jongen, Leseman & Plantega, 2013; Leseman & Slot, 2013). The question therefore is why this feature of ECEC professional development remains largely unorganised, or self-organised, particularly since investments here have demonstrated impact on high quality ECEC through the development of high quality ECEC staff (as found by Early et al., 2007)?

Theme 3: ECEC educators' role, responsibility and quality concepts

Under this theme we examine three interrelated features: the roles and the responsibilities of ECEC staff, and the quality (concepts) being upheld. The educator's role is pivotal to countries' ECEC provisions and their responsibilities, thus, reflect how this role has been established both formally, as in legislation, and also through practice. We see a dichotomy in systems across Europe whereby some build and clearly articulate the role of ECEC staff while others do not; for example in England where there are clear frameworks that address child development and ECEC practices, whereby the role of ECEC educators is mandated to meet quality standards, nationally, also regularly monitored by Ofsted. The implication of such a formal construct is that roles become legitimised; however, this codification may become restrictive.

Contrasting this is Denmark, for instance, where the ECEC educator's role is not mentioned in legislation, except in relation to the implementation of a national curriculum. Nevertheless, Danish ECEC staff has established practices which are formulated through pre-service professional development and in-service practice. This means that the subject and substance of their roles has evolved from the ECEC setting. Danish ECEC staff must continually document and self-evaluate their pedagogy and practice, while also being responsible for implementing theoretically-based practices, according to the national curriculum. Likewise, the role of ECEC staff in Italy is addressed through national guideline principles, such as being well-motivated, supportive of participatory interaction, with an educational 'style' that is enhanced by collaborative work, in-service training, knowledge and culture. Portuguese ECEC staff is responsible for implementing national guidelines, which consist of broad, overarching principles. Based on these, they are expected to create their own curricula, developed according to the immediate needs of their individual ECEC settings and learners. Portuguese guidelines thus emphasise the autonomy and self-responsibility of ECEC staff. The official profile for ECEC staff in Portugal is outlined in statute DL 241 2001, and includes the strategies and activities to be used in ECEC settings. Officially and legally, there is an expectation of teaching excellence (Diário da República, 2005).

Equally defining of ECEC staff's roles are the educational responsibilities they are charged with, which may be ascribed to specific learning areas, such as in England, Norway and the Netherlands. In England, there are seven areas of learning (GOV.UK, 2014) divided between prime (communication and language; physical development; personal, social and emotional development) and specific areas (literacy; mathematics; understanding the world; expressive arts and design). Similarly, Norway defines seven learning areas, namely: communication, language and text; body, movement and health; art, culture and creativity; nature, environment and technology; ethics, religion and philosophy; local community and society; numbers, spaces and shapes. In the Netherlands, the notion of learning areas is known as quality standards, addressing four child development areas; emotional safety, developing autonomy, cognitive competences and social competences.

As a whole, this demonstrates the multi-disciplinary function of the educator, and also of the child, whereby ECEC systems try to address both as 'holistic' beings who have cognitive needs, socio-emotional needs and developmental needs. This is emphasised in an example from Italian regional guidelines, which do not explicitly refer to learning goals but highlight that: 'Children are active protagonists of their own growth and developmental processes; the hundred languages; listening; learning as a process of individual and group construction; educational research; documentation; *progettazione* (the process of planning and designing teaching and learning activities); organisation; environment-space and relationships; professional development; assessment' (Reggio Emilia, April 2010). Notably, the Reggio Emilia approach has been adopted by Greece, where ECEC staff focus mainly on teaching methods, projects and play. In light of the absence of a national curriculum or learning standards in Greece's ECEC system, the educator's role is largely defined by individual ECEC settings. This means that there could be great differences from one part of the country to the other; however, since there are overarching principles, core values in ECEC practice are encouraged.

Paralleling their role in achieving ECEC's child learning goals, ECEC staff also plays a significant role in meeting ECEC quality goals. For instance, England's Ofsted inspects the quality of the delivery of ECEC in all settings and how well providers are meeting the welfare, learning and development requirements, also based on their seven areas of learning for ECEC. Ofsted inspects and regulates quality according to unified, national quality standards, under clear frameworks. Portugal also has well-defined standards for both structural and processual quality. The Framework Law of Pre-School Education (Law 5/97, INCM, 1997) defines ECEC quality criteria for all public and private educational settings in Portugal. These include defining the objectives of ECEC, common curriculum rules, staff qualifications, and opening hours, quality of buildings, equipment, materials, and staff: child ratios (structural quality). Their ECEC guidelines emphasise staff autonomy and responsibility, and career statutes for ECEC staff underscore their active, empowered position in the educational process, which

allows them the autonomy to manage the learning process and adapt teaching methodologies as they see fit (Diário da República, 2005) (processual quality). Portugal's national Teachers Career Statute (see II. Individual country analyses, J. Portugal) also outlines these points as the rights and responsibilities of all teachers, along with the basics of performance evaluations.

Meanwhile, we have seen that some countries have no systemic quality standards or evaluations that ECEC staff is responsible for. For example, despite the absence of a national ECEC curriculum, there are several broad guidelines with respect to the provision of quality standards in the Netherlands. These largely centre on emotional security for all children up to the age of six. For younger children (aged zero to four), the concept also includes respect for the child's autonomy, authoritative child-rearing, general competence development, and overall emotional wellbeing. For older children, quality standards are more related to the later goals of primary education. Therefore, although there is no specific structure to quality standards and the educator's role, these are underscored by guidelines.

Among the countries presented in this report, there are no legislated, national quality standards in Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands and Poland. England, Norway and Portugal are the three countries who have clearly defined quality standards in national legislation such as in the Early Years Foundational Stage Statutory Framework (England), the Kindergarten Act (Norway), the Framework Law of Pre-School Education and the Teachers Career Statute (Portugal). What this demonstrates is a tendency for quality to be defined on the micro- or meso-levels of ECEC systems, whereby recognition and leadership in quality in the macro-system is lacking. As a result, although we can infer that quality is self-governed where there is no national intervention, this does not necessarily result in every child gaining access to high quality ECEC throughout any given system. There may be variations to the point of contrast in the characteristics and also delivery of ECEC, both horizontally and vertically, throughout European ECEC systems.

Theme 4: Policy developments and reforms

There is a growing political interest in reforming ECEC systems in European countries; especially regarding new and arising needs for improvement regarding four issues. First, the enhancement of staff qualifications is emphasised and discussed in several countries, which reflects a need for greater academisation in the ECEC system, which again reflects how the role of educator has been established both formally, as in legislation, and also through practice. Second, the share of pedagogically trained staff in ECEC is a part of desired reforms, and highlights the importance of increasing the number of staff with a university degree. Third, there is also a move towards integrated national ECEC systems for all children under the age of six. Finally, there is a pressing need for in-service professional development opportunities for ECEC staff.

For example, German discussions around staff qualifications and professional development centre on the following issues:

- how to increase the number of staff who hold university degrees;
- how to attract more male practitioners to the field;
- increasing ECEC staff salaries;
- greater regulation/control of qualifications for home day care staff;
- the need for better qualifications for practitioners working with children under the age of three;
- the need for qualified staff to implement curriculum guidelines.

All of these issues are compounded by a skills shortage in the German ECEC system. In addition, beginning in 2013, all children in Germany over the age of one year old were officially guaranteed a

place in the ECEC system, resulting in increased enrolment (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2013). Despite, or perhaps in light of, this expansion, the demand for ECEC is still not fulfilled and is also increasing.

In contrast, Denmark's recent reform (Ministry of Higher Education and Science, 2014) pushes for an increase in pre-service education and qualification. The objective is to both stimulate greater specialisation, as well as emphasise educators' development of competences that can enable reflection, implementation and action in ECEC in innovative ways. This is a direct result of the demands and challenges of a postmodern society[83].

In Finland another important change came into effect at the beginning of this year (2015), when ECEC staff became eligible to receive state-funded in-service training alongside other teacher groups as per the Ministry of Education and Culture. New ECEC legislation had been under development since 2012, with three areas of particular concern: 1) personnel structure: how to ensure that there are enough staff members with pedagogical training; 2) staff qualifications: there is a strong consensus towards requiring the heads of ECEC settings have a master's degree, as well as towards maintaining (rather than lowering) the qualification requirements for ECEC staff; 3) new pre-primary and basic education curricula developed in December, 2014 to take effect by August, 2016. Yet again, the reforms reflect a society response to changing conditions of today's children.

In Greece, a newly unveiled reform has implications for the educator's role. In 2013, a new system of teacher evaluation was introduced that looked at in-service training experiences in particular (Presidential Decree 152-FEK 240-5/11/2013). It declared that in-service training should try to build teachers' motivation toward developing high-quality education and lifelong learning. The law also stipulated that kindergarten teachers could only be evaluated as 'exceptional' if they held a master's or doctoral degree and could show continuous academic effort (through conference presentations or published works, for example). In addition, the new criteria for professional development include in-service training, administrative experience and participation in or development of innovative educational programmes.

In Italy a new bill under discussion (Bill 1260/2014) calls for an integrated system for all children under the age of six, mainly funded by the Ministry of Education. The programme would require a bachelor's degree for preschool teachers, as well as obligatory in-service professional development. These measures are encompassed in a more general reform of the school system, raising hopes and also discussions because, if approved, they would redesign the whole ECEC system, and re-set the present balance between central and local responsibilities and between different providers and their long-established traditions. More specifically, possible developments are: redefining quality criteria, implementing activities in continuity with nursery schools and preschools, defining the professional profile of a teacher-educator at the national level, and implementing in-service training programmes.

As part of our analysis, we can perceive that, as challenges to ECEC staff increase, we are witnessing a greater emphasis on educators' qualifications to improve child outcomes by meeting new high quality standards, nationally and at a local level; the need for policy development in this area is discussed in most participating countries. This need for qualified staff to implement guidelines for learning goals and curricula, as well as quality ECEC in practice, is raised in all the countries. However, in some countries such changes in the demands and roles for ECEC staff are reflected in current discussions and detailed issues for improvement (e.g. Germany, Italy, Norway, Netherland, Poland, Portugal), and in some countries such discussions lead to the development of new policy and reforms (e.g. Denmark,

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[83] For more information, see (in Danish)
www.uvm.dk/~/media/UVM/Filer/Udd/Dagtilbud/PDF%2012/120521%20fremtidens%20dagtilbud%20rapport%20pejlemaerker
.pdf, which identifies four central indicators for child learning and combatting exclusion in ECEC: reflective and planned pedagogical practice focused on learning and inclusion; goal-oriented cooperation with parents; a robust evaluation culture focused on quality development; and clear and professional management at all levels.

England, Finland, Greece). Another insight is whether or not such demands for a new ECEC system emphasising a higher level of quality might be administered by top-down strategies or bottom-up.

As we have seen, there are strong examples of responses to changes in society from all participating countries, which keep the debate surrounding equal provision of high quality ECEC and governance across a national or local system alive. As a consequence, a balance between central and local responsibilities will be reflected in policy developments – however, the needs for future staff qualification and ECEC improvements will remain at the forefront. Finally in this context, reforms and new discussions seem to be heading in the direction that further in-service training is a right and a duty for ECEC staff, addressed at a political level.

Theme 5: Quality assurance regulation, monitoring and evaluation

Across Europe we can see three distinct models of quality assurance regulation, monitoring and evaluation of professional development in ECEC which can be particularly highlighted in four of the participating countries. England serves as an example of a highly structured, nationally organised system, headed by Ofsted, conducting regular evaluations by non-governmental representatives who then share results with the public. On the other hand, there are some countries which do not have systematised regulations or evaluations, such as Denmark, who nevertheless undertake self-organised evaluations that examine applied practices, based on the national curriculum, per municipality, region or ECEC unit, for instance. Finally, there are countries which have a more interactive regulation model, such as Italy and Finland, and report several stakeholders' involvement in evaluations, which are decentralised.

In England, and starting in pre-service education, professional development aims to equip ECEC staff with the right combination of skills and knowledge to implement EYFS goals. The main focus is to enable children to achieve their goals in England's seven areas of learning and development, as addressed in national curriculum legislation. Ofsted, the largest evaluative body in English ECEC, conducts regulatory inspections of professional development programmes nationally, including inspections of providers' performance in terms of trainees (how many are passing and failing), quality and standards, the efficiency and effectiveness of provisions, and evaluations of how they meet trainees' needs. Evaluations at ECEC units assess childcare and social care, and how relationships are built with children and their parents, among other criteria. As such, innovations or reforms in the ECEC system, including ECEC professional development, emanate from Ofsted or in collaboration with Ofsted.

In contrast to this model, Denmark does not have systematised, regulatory evaluations of ECEC professional development, yet there are national guidelines, known as three-year development contracts, that are formulated between the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education and individual institutions. These contracts contain three to five binding objectives as identified by the Ministry and a corresponding number of objectives determined per institution. Progress towards these objectives is reported annually, independently from regulations or quality mechanisms. As such, quality and monitoring is largely self-organised and decentralised in the ECEC system in Denmark.

Two examples of ECEC systems that follow a model somewhere between the centralised and decentralised approaches to quality assurance and regulation in ECEC professional development are Finland and Italy. In Finland, quality assurance regulation, monitoring and evaluation can be found per municipality, as in the city of Jyväskylä (2014), for instance. In its regulation, ECEC staff are mentioned as the 'key element in maintaining high quality ECEC. The goal is to establish working communities which are competent and open to changes and where individual work is made transparent for different collaborators and subjected for evaluation' (ibid., p. 23). The regulation thus includes parents, children, collaborators and staff as active participants in quality evaluation processes, which

take place regularly, through various evaluation methods. As stated in the country report, parental satisfaction, for instance, is evaluated twice per year through electronic surveys, and parental panel discussions take place regularly to discuss quality issues. ECEC personnel also provide feedback on 'working motivation, fluency of the work, and matters concerning developing one's own work, twice a year' (ibid.). The result of these ongoing evaluations and discussions is that practitioners are in turn motivated to reflect on and consider their practices from a variety of broader perspectives and quality becomes somewhat of a joint effort that is dynamic and in constant iteration.

Paralleling the essence of this dynamic evaluative process is Italy's approach. There, no systematic monitoring and evaluation of professional development exists. However, as Musatti and Picchio (2010) observed, 'In Italian experiences, evaluating ECEC quality is considered a dynamic and continuous process, involving a plurality of stakeholders and it is aimed at analysing, discussing and improving educational practice' (p. 141). In addition, several evaluation initiatives of ECEC quality, including professional development, are in place at local levels in Italy. They list professional development as one of the most important factors in quality – representing a wider view on quality, rather than systems that focus on staff behaviour for instance, or solely on child outcomes. Italy also includes a wide variety of participants in evaluations, which are based on observation tools such as bottom-up experiences of assessing quality, describing, and analysing a centre's activities. Furthermore, and in-line with the Reggio Emilia approach to ECEC, Italian quality assessment draws on documentation (of practice, of observation, of children's responsiveness, etc.) as a key to greater insight, self-evaluation and continuous professional improvement and renewal.

Overall therefore, the various models of evaluation and quality assurance contribute to ECEC in different ways. The top-down approach is one that might be critiqued for its management and controlling aspects; however, the approach may be one that safeguards quality levels more efficiently and effectively, on a greater scale and more harmoniously across a national ECEC system. England makes it explicit that every child is entitled to high quality ECEC provision, irrespective of location, and similarly, ECEC providers can also expect a certain level of mandated quality from their professional development systems, again, due to standards and evaluations from national bodies, and most especially, Ofsted. On the other hand, changes, innovations and reforms become highly dependent on specialist knowledge and evaluations – meaning that change can become quite bureaucratic, and autocratic.

In contrast, quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation that disperses responsibilities and roles, also diffuses power and creates an interdependence between stakeholders when it comes to assessing and also improving quality. Through the Finnish and Italian examples, we find that the interactive and dynamic model of quality assurance involves ECEC practitioners, leaders, municipalities, parents, among others, and therefore, evaluation is not just an observatory process emanating from external stakeholders taking a look into ECEC. This feedback system implies that ECEC systems are in a continued process of self-assessments that are open to responsive changes and incremental improvements emanating from inside and outside the ECEC setting. The competence of practitioners to engage in this interactive mode of quality assessment is an important part of the pre-service education; however, there are certain pitfalls that may be inferred from this model. Firstly, if responsibility is too diffused, and localised, this spells the potential for unequal ECEC provisions and perhaps even conflicting developments of what 'quality' is and should be, from one ECEC setting to another.

Theme 6: Highlights of innovative approaches

The insight we can gather from the individual country analyses on innovative approaches to professional development will be based on the ways the countries conceptualise innovative approaches at a national and local level, as well as through the countries' examples of innovative pre-service and in-service professional development. Through this, it becomes possible to explore more in-depth how

innovative approaches to professional development in ECEC are perceived and implemented in Europe as ways of renewing practices, in striving towards high quality ECEC goals and improved child outcomes, also for the most vulnerable and socially disadvantaged children. We can gain further insight by differentiating between innovation on three levels: 1) a macro-level (i.e. form, content, delivery modes, e.g. in the reforms of pre-service education); 2) an inter-organisational or meso-level, also through inter-sectorial innovative approaches (e.g. staff working together with research, universities, municipal sectors), consisting of new and creative ways to collaborate for change (e.g. living conditions and educational opportunities for all children and young people starting in ECEC); and 3) a micro-level or individual and organisational learning approach (e.g. in-service professional development programmes focusing on innovative competences, through short- or long-term courses and training, perhaps though staff working in communities of practice).

Based on this, we see that innovative approaches differ a lot throughout the countries: from new, emerging ways of considering ECEC systems, both politically (the macro-level) and among service providers (the meso-level), such as in the Netherlands (Leseman & Slot, 2013), to countries such as Italy, where there has been a long tradition for innovative approaches on all three levels. In the latter, we find traditions of renewing practices in both pre-service and in-service professional development programmes, e.g. Reggio Emilia's emphasis on strong relations between municipalities and universities in order to improve high quality ECEC, and a range of bottom-up research experiences. In the Italian context, to be innovative, practices should involve whole areas or networks, including parents and communities, and link the acquisition of educational skills with an awareness of the cultural, social and political missions of ECEC. The definition of innovation includes change that is sustainable, systemic (not episodic or realised in single centres), and which exploits the possibilities offered by technology.

A traditional understanding in the literature on innovation (e.g. Fagerberg, 2004) is that it is strongly linked to economic development, which occurs through new ideas, inventions and products. In the field of ECEC, the emphasis of innovation is more closely linked to new processes and practices in relation to the renewal of social services. In this analysis, a useful working definition might therefore be: 'social innovation refers to the processes of collective idea generation, selection and implementation by people who participate collaboratively to meet social challenges' (Dawson & Daniel, 2010, p. 16). The idea of professional development in an innovative perspective concerns the extent to which staff are able or qualified to provide high quality ECEC based on creative and critical thinking coupled with an ability to effect change within their contexts. This includes, for instance, current conditions, national legislation, resources, standardisation and implications.

Most of the countries in this report have emphasised that they do not have a national definition of innovative approaches and only few studies on the evaluation of professional development programmes' effectiveness. For example, we can gain some insight into the evidence of innovation through the Danish cases on in-service professional development programmes and outcomes for three to six year olds (Jensen et al., 2013; Jensen et al., 2015). However even if there is no definition of innovation at a national level (the macro-level) the insight we gather from the individual country analyses shows that there is a growing awareness of the importance of strengthening ECEC pre-service and in-service professional development, especially emphasising collaboration between research and practice (the meso-level) and thereby training educators' innovative competence development.

In Greece, innovative approaches are those which consider in-service programmes as part of a continuum of professional development involving ECEC staff via action research, involving educators in the planning and implementation of programmes, and receiving official recognition from national ministries or local authorities. Furthermore, in-service professional development could be described as innovative when it: uses modern methods and techniques in adult education; aims at changing/transforming beliefs, principles and practices; introduces new teaching approaches; promotes the use of new educational materials/means; combines theory with practice; considers the particular trainee's characteristics, needs and interests; and promotes lifelong learning.

We see several examples of this trend, linking research and practice and developing a practice-based educational research, thereby developing high quality ECEC staff. Portugal emphasises the idea of putting research into practice; for example, the Developing Quality in Partnerships[84] project that specifically targets preschools. This programme takes its inspiration from the English Effective Early Learning Project (EEL) devised by Christine Pascal and Tony Bertram in 1997[85]. In England we also see examples of innovations in the ECEC workforce which are related to programmes that link research with early years practice, for example, through the A+ Education Ltd.[86] programme on training on Environment Rating Scales.

Through its newest reform for bachelor-level education (Ministry of Higher Education and Science, 2014), Denmark provides an example of innovation on all three levels (macro, meso-and micro), as it aims to improve ECEC staff competences to meet new challenges in today's society. In light of the reform, there is new content in the pre-service training that focuses on social inequality and inclusion. In addition, trained staff is then to address such challenges by implementing changes that are based on theoretical, evidence-based knowledge and by using critical reflection systematically. They are also taught to meet new demands in order to collaborate with professionals from other sectors (meso-level). On a micro-level, the focus is both on staff individual competence development (reflective practitioner, lifelong learning approach, organisational learning approaches) and collaborative innovative competence.

In Poland, there was a need to develop new methods on the meso-level of ECEC in terms of childcare and education and staff levels. New professional development methods put forth have been cooperative efforts between the public crèche network of Łódź and the University of Łódź in improving ECEC staff's critical thinking in relation to practice. In Finland, innovative approaches emphasise the development of new competences in terms of mentoring projects and educational leadership courses in ECEC, both addressing the micro- and meso-levels of innovation. Also, Finland prioritises collaborative projects between the universities of Jyväskylä and Tampere. Within these projects, ECEC staff are trained to start working as peer mentors, so that their colleagues can strengthen their professional roles and identities.

As shown throughout this report, ECEC staff can no longer be content with acquiring specific knowledge and skills related to ECEC contexts – they have to develop competences that allow them to apply knowledge and skills towards an ongoing renewal of practice. In response to this, we have seen that all countries address change through innovative perspectives that suit their own contexts and that are deployed on micro-, meso- and macro-levels. What we don't know from these insights is how ECEC staff actually develops new innovative competences through pre-service and in-service professional development, and the impact of changes in, for example, content or mode of delivery. Largely missing is evidence on the effectiveness of innovative changes on practice. There is a need to further develop this field. Well-designed empirical studies that deeply examine innovative approaches quantitatively and qualitatively must focus on the processes of innovation as well as on the impacts on child outcomes.

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[84] For more information, see www.dgidc.min-edu.pt/educacaoinfancia/data/.../manual_dqp.pdf

[85] For more information, see www.crec.co.uk/consultancy

[86] For more information, see www.aplus-education.co.uk

IV. Additional insights

In addition to the six thematic analyses presented in the previous section, we found an emerging focus on three specific points, namely: Additional insight 1: Reflection in practice; Additional insight 2: ECEC and the vulnerable; and, Additional insight 3: Professional development networks and communities of practice. As we will see, a greater emphasis on these issues is in direct response to context-specific systemic pressures, and also new societal needs.

The additional insights are also relevant to the gaps in research identified in the first part of this report, and reiterated in the individual country analyses. Addressing these three areas helps us meet the challenges set forth by our research questions. Reflective practice strengthens educational attainment and competence development, leading to improved professional competences; focusing on the vulnerable in our analysis helps us gauge how ECEC systems respond to the the demands of all children and especially the most vulnerable; and communities of practice aid in sustainable workforce development (in-service), and, as we will see, support innovative approaches to ECEC systems as well.

Additional insight 1:
Reflection in practice

As an overall insight stemming from the cross-country analysis, we have perceived an emerging emphasis upon reflective practice and the reflective practitioner. We view this as inseparable from innovative approaches in that reflection is linked to the continual improvement of high-quality ECEC, and is an impetus for the evolution of ECEC. We see differences in the ways in which reflection is implemented and emphasised in the various national contexts, but, nevertheless, it is becoming integral to all aspects of ECEC in every participating country (e.g. pre-service qualification and pedagogy, quality assurance, in-service professional development, etc.).

As such, the examples discussed below are not used to highlight differences and disparities between ECEC systems, but rather illustrate how reflective practice manifests in a variety of settings, according to a variety of needs and priorities. The significance of this trend rests in the fact that reflection is a particular activity through which all areas of practice can be addressed, stretching beyond inherited strategies, goals and content of ECEC. For example, legislation, best practices, and pre-service and in-service professional development inform practitioners of what they must do and ought to do. Monitoring and evaluations thus ensue to verify how well a prescribed practice aligns to reality, with an intrinsic focus on evidence and outcomes. Reflection, however, encompasses deeper insights into both the outcomes and the processes of ECEC. It puts the question of 'why' at the forefront, rather than merely 'how' and 'what'. In this sense, the action of reflection holds enormous potential for professional development since, at its heart, reflection is what can lead to continuous renewal of ECEC strategies and practice. Top-down, one-day professional development courses, memoranda, updated manuals and the like can certainly address changes in ECEC content. But these methods of professional development do not place reflection at the forefront; arguably, reflection can impede changes that are implemented through these means. Simply put, however, reflection in practice is what leads to sustainable impact in ECEC.

In Denmark, reflection as part of the competence development of ECEC staff is addressed on a policy level, through pre-service professional development, as well as through innovative approaches to ECEC. Danish policy requires that ECEC staff is educated to work with reflection, planning and knowledge in their practice. The country's recent (2014) pre-service professional development reform highlights cooperation and development as an educator's fourth competence area. ECEC educators' third work placement during their pre-service training has the objective of training them to work with systematic and knowledge-based reflection contributing to development and innovation within pedagogical practice. ECEC pre-service practitioners are expected to be able to document and evaluate their own role in pedagogical practice, including reflection on the quality of children's learning processes. They are to use evidence-based knowledge and use critical reflection systematically in a way that qualifies ECEC practice and high quality ECEC. They are also trained to meet new demands in order to collaborate between sectors (emphasising a meso-level reflective feature). On the micro-level, the focus is on educators' individual competence development (reflective practitioner, lifelong learning approach, organisational learning approaches), where the emphasis is placed on collaborative, innovative competences that cope with change in the everyday practice within ECEC organisations.

An example from Denmark on reflection being emphasised in in-service professional development is provided by the VIDA project, which includes:

- Implementing evidence-based knowledge within everyday practice in ECEC;
- Attention and specific training with regards to socially disadvantaged children in day care;
- Critical reflection on setting goals and working on best practices within staff groups;

- Developing competences to work innovatively with learning and organisational change processes.

Overall, therefore, Denmark represents a system where reflection in practice is integrated in pre-service professional development and highlighted as part of everyday practice and innovation in ECEC. It has become integral to every aspect of ECEC.

Similarly, in Germany, reflection is integrated as a means to ensuring ECEC quality (both structural and processual). Practitioners are expected to reflect on pedagogical processes and actively participate in in-service professional development by sharing their knowledge and experiences.

In Poland, meanwhile, one finds an example of reflection in practice as an innovative approach. Through the Łódź crèche network for children under the age of three, critical and overall analyses of the concept of work have been introduced. Similarly, in Portugal's innovative changes, the Portuguese Modern School Movement[87] encourages a continuous process of reflection and practical innovation by ECEC staff, at various levels in the ECEC system, over several years. In this model, professional development is performed largely through collaborative work between teachers. Regular meetings are important, so that teachers can reflect on and share their own personal experiences (Folque & Siraj-Blatchford, 2003). Also, innovative in-service professional training is provided in Portugal, in the context of collaborative consultation in support of ECEC staff connectedness and reflectiveness. Underscoring the innovative approach that includes reflection, critical reflection is explicitly referred to in the Portuguese Curriculum Guidelines for Preschool Education as the basis for educational intentionality. According to these guidelines, educators' reflection precedes, accompanies, and follows their actions. Furthermore, teamwork is explicitly mentioned as a means of reflecting on professional practice.

In Norway, we find similarities, as reflection forms part of the competences and skills developed in pre-service professional development; more specifically, to reflect on the educational work related to content and in accordance with ethical requirements and guidelines, and based on research and experience-based knowledge. In relation to in-service professional development, Norwegian kindergarten teachers and pedagogical leaders are offered training in the form of becoming mentors for pre-service ECEC educators. As mentors, they are to provide opportunities for all ECEC staff to strengthen their in-service professional development through reflective pedagogical practice and better quality of work.

Critical reflection has also been noted as a key issue in Greek pre-service professional development programmes for kindergarten teachers, especially emphasised during work placements. Peer teaching, collaborative learning, collective reflection, action research and lesson study are among the methods used that focus on critical reflection. One study found that posing different kinds of questions to pre-service ECEC educators during their work placements encouraged different kinds of reflection (Avgitidou & Hatzoglou, 2012). Asking pre-service ECEC educators to make generalisations, for example, was more effective at getting them to achieve higher levels of reflection. Similar benefits were found with questions that asked students to not just describe and evaluate their practices, but also to analyse their evaluations and provide examples as well as alternative solutions (ibid.). Avgitidou (2011) also demonstrated how using journaling (e.g. logs and diaries) as a research method can enhance and promote reflective practices. Locally organised training programmes also incorporate some developments such as critical reflection in in-service training. However, there is still a lack of coordination, evaluation and central planning when it comes to professional development for ECEC staff in Greece, so reflection in practice remains somewhat neglected.

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[87] For more information, see www.movimentoescolamoderna.pt

In Italy, the promotion of critical reflection on practice, connecting practice to theories and goals (in-service), and critical reflection linked to observation and documentation is central to ECEC. Reflection has inspired several new programmes, despite increased budget cuts at the national level, demonstrating the sustainable impact that reflection can have on systems that do not enjoy a wealth of resources. There is an emphasis on reflection as part of current Italian professional development, also as part of innovative approaches to ECEC in Italy, and this remains the case, despite budget cuts.

It is noteworthy how critical reflection plays a central role in Finnish ECEC pre-service training, in particular when students have their supervised work placements in day care centres and schools. Students are required to reflect upon and develop their professional identity by determining specific goals for themselves during their work placement. The achievement of these goals is evaluated individually and together with their supervisors, who are practising ECEC educators. Furthermore, students design and plan pedagogical activities in ECEC learner groups. These plans are critically reflected upon afterwards and feedback is provided by supervisors from the particular ECEC setting, as well as by supervising teachers at the students' university. The stated goal is that students grow into autonomous, self-reflective, and ethically responsible professionals with a strong research foundation, prepared to meet the challenges of a constantly changing profession, the evolving needs of schooling, and lifelong learning. This is achieved by creating a dialogical learning environment, in which students and supervisors collaborate in courses and research projects. In this sense, reflection is rooted in the history of Finnish education and professional development.

From 2013 to 2015, the municipality of Jyväskylä has undertaken a local, systematic, reflective in-service programme. This programme features guest lectures in ECEC settings, municipal curricula, and diverse topics such as the learning environment and children's emotional wellbeing and self-esteem. The whole is designed to be a continuous reflective process between several groups, including the municipality, the care settings and individual staff members. In this sense, reflection in practice and innovation are also integrated on the macro, meso- and micro-levels of ECEC.

In England, however, there is a stark contrast to the examples listed above. Here there are very clear evaluative guidelines, which stand at the forefront of ECEC practice and professional development. Reflection in practice is therefore inferred, but also falls secondary to adhering to changing standards. England's method of ensuring high quality ECEC is primarily by training staff to follow guidelines, rather than to make use of reflective practice.

Overall, therefore, it cannot be said that reflection in practice is comprehensively positive for ECEC systems. Improvements from reflection are highly dependent on individual educators' ability, capacity and competence. To help overcome competence barriers, it is therefore important that an ECEC strategy include reflection as part of the pre-service and in-service professional development processes. Complementing feedback, reflection closes an evaluative loop that takes into account self-insights and external assessments of practice, thereby creating a holistic evaluative process.

Another obstacle to reflection in practice is the amount of time required, with time not easily afforded in under-resourced systems. Nevertheless, making reflection in practice a priority in pre-service and in-service professional development can lead to sustained, continuously improved quality and positive child outcomes, as evidenced by the country reports. As presented by the Italian partners, critical reflection on practices is central to inspiring several new programmes and changes in ECEC, despite increased budget cuts at the national level.

In a highly standardised system, reflection poses a degrre of risk in potentially destabilising standards, which may cause systemic pressure. Standards are what help practitioners define their practice and the features of their practice. Therefore, there is still some need for standards. Without them, we would not have a means of assessing practice. What may be needed, as the trend shows an increase in reflection on practice, is to strike a balance between such standards andmore open (not entirely rigid, closed, or

constricting) definitions and standards applicable to ECEC, which educators can use constructively to navigate and for self-reflection and self-evaluation. A strong example of this can be taken from the Finnish case, as its ECEC system contains evaluation procedures that commit staff to reflect on their own practices from several perspectives, also through feedback and surveys on working motivation, fluency of the work, and matters of developing one's own work. The system has a systematised (rather than random) strategy; therefore, the responsibility for reflection and feedback is well articulated, as is the responsibility for change emanating from the practice.

Reflection in practice and reflection on practice are emerging as an important trend in ECEC that begins with pre-service professional development and can also extend to the wider community of stakeholders who engage in reflection. Inseparable from innovative practices, it is nevertheless not at the forefront of all European ECEC. Reflection can be an enabler of positive change and continuous renewal of ECEC, e.g. by promoting a more mindful ECEC educator, who is more conscious of ECEC tasks, but can also lead to disparities in ECEC provisions if changes that arise from reflection do not become systemic.

Additional insight 2:
ECEC and the vulnerable

Insights regarding ECEC and the vulnerable were originally prompted by WP3's overarching objective in the CARE project, which includes an examination of professional development systems in European ECEC in terms of how they impact child wellbeing and learning for *all* children, and as a way of tackling social inequality. In order to explore this theme more explicitly, we asked partners the following question for this report: "Please provide information on how professional development systems are addressing the issues of socially disadvantaged children/families and/or immigrants. In other words, what (if any) professional development efforts are being made to integrate these populations into ECEC and thus help ensure a successful transition to primary schools?" By not providing countries with a specific definition for 'socially disadvantaged', they were encouraged to define it contextually. In their responses, countries denoted the vulnerable as 'special needs' children, 'immigrant' children, 'disabled' children, children from 'low income' households, children with 'unemployed parents', 'poor' children, 'at-risk' children and families, and children from 'single-parent' families. These differences in definitions signal differences in understandings, which in turn may signal differences in awareness, recognition, insight or even knowledge of *who* vulnerable children are across ECEC systems. In turn, this poses several challenges to ECEC systems, not least to staff professional development.

Differences in the recognition of the vulnerable result in shifts in investments, priorities, curriculum in professional development (pre-service and in-service), and intervention efforts. So as a first observation of the impact of these variations, there is not enough attention on *whom* the vulnerable are in ECEC systems in general, and how they can be addressed in professional development programmes. There could be standalone studies on the vulnerable, but large-scale, cross-country studies on this aspect of ECEC and the professional development of educators have not been identified. Leading from Heckman (2008), the best possible investment in tackling social inequality in a society is to work on ECEC as an intervention. Thus, if we begin with the premise that European societies are in constant change, with new challenges and demands, influenced by the impacts of globalisation and greater mobility, this particular theme demands greater attention.

In the individual country analyses (see Part II), however, there are some pointed examples that provide insight into the contextual differences of ECEC systems addressing the vulnerable. The Italian system addresses special needs and immigrant children's needs in pre-service education, and in line with the Reggio Emilia approach, 'inclusive early childhood practices include family and community members in a collaborative process' (Vakil, Freeman, & Swim, 2003). This is similarly addressed in Denmark's

2004 Day Care Act (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2004) and in the Task Force on Future Day care (Task Force For Fremtidens Dagtilbud, 2012), emphasising inclusion in ECEC as an approach to the vulnerable. In Greece, these segments are referred to as 'at-risk', 'poor' and from 'single-parent' families in the Netherlands, they are referred to as 'disadvantaged' and include non-native speakers, low-income and ethnic minority children.

In England, where multiculturalism is very much a part of society, special needs and the disadvantaged are addressed from pre-service education and on. All professional development programmes focus on disadvantage because it is an important part of the official pre-service syllabus. ECEC educators, however, may receive subsidies for their pre-service professional development and may participate in the national programme for Children's Centres, through the Sure Start Children's Centres programme, with more than 2,500 children's centres located mainly in poor areas to support families and children with low education and health problems in England (GOV.UK, 2013). England also reported that from 2014, ECEC settings receive £300 for each child in their care whose parents fall in the lowest 20% of income earners. The funding is then used in centres in poor neighbourhoods for additional in-service professional development, though the grant does not have a training requirement attached to it. As such, this example shows that the best possible way to tackle issues related to the vulnerable is to invest in professional development (Heckman, 2008).

Italy reported that almost 10% of the public ECEC system represents vulnerable children with special needs. As a result, Italian pre-service professional development curricula address inclusive education for children with disabilities and immigrant backgrounds. The three-year university degree in educational science, for example, includes courses in special education and the psychology of disability and inclusion to prepare educators to work specifically with special needs children up to the age of three. Moreover, the five-year university degree in *Scienze della Formazione Primaria* includes courses about inclusive education. Beyond this, teachers who want to especially work as special needs teachers are required to attend an extra 60 ECTS annual course focused on using new technologies to work with special needs children.

Similarly in Greece, public and private organisations address the issue of socially disadvantaged children and families by drawing from theory and teaching methodologies to help in appropriately responding to diversity and inclusion issues in ECEC settings and working with ECEC families. One such example is through the Roma children Education Project[88], which is a specialised in-service[89] professional development option.

In contrast, Poland reported that, since their ECEC population remains relatively homogenous, professional development courses concerning immigrant families and children are few and far between. There are, however, special courses for working with vulnerable children with special needs, and those who are socially disadvantaged.

Germany, meanwhile, has experienced several changes to its ECEC system, including higher numbers of children under three years of age, and more children with immigrant backgrounds. Government curricula, however, are still calling for more academic-related learning in addition to a social-emotional focus; there are no professional development programmes to support educators in this transition, and professional development in relation to the vulnerable remains nascent.

In Portugal, professional development systems are addressing issues of socially disadvantaged children and families as well as immigrant groups through dispersed training initiatives. Educators from the

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[88] See for example www.keda.gr/epam/actions_sup.html

[89] More information can be obtained at www.pi-schools.gr/download/news/t_eisag_epimorfosis.pdf

public ECEC network, working in Priority Intervention Educational Territories[90] may have access to additional (more systematic) in-service professional development resources, dependent, however, on the goals and strategies included in the Improvement Plan designed by the board of their individual school groupings.

In Finland, although ECEC staff are entitled to participate in in-service training each year (Children's Day Care Act, 1973), with somewhere between three and ten days allocated to in-service training annually (Social Welfare Act, 50/2005), there is no unified national system for professional development regarding ECEC for the vulnerable. Staff do, however, have free access to research institutes such as the Niilo Mäki Institute which specialises in learning difficulties. Moreover, individual professional development (in-service) courses often touch upon themes such as supporting immigrant children to feel included in ECEC groups, or supporting children with problems in language development or other learning difficulties. Specific courses focusing on socially disadvantaged children and their families are, however, rare in Finland. Children from these families have full access to ECEC, but social disadvantage is a sensitive matter and is seldom directly addressed in professional courses. This especially emphasises the point made in the introduction to this insight: that without recognition, addressing the vulnerable involves a multitude of challenges. At the same time, it seems that labelling sectors of society and children as 'vulnerable' has implications Finish society is uncomfortable with. That is not to say that the vulnerable become neglected, but in the Finish case, children are not labelled in this way.

The Netherlands has reported a very large-scale (approximately €30 million), initiative addressing the vulnerable. Sardes, a private company, has been contracted by the Ministry of Education to provide further professional development for preschool and day care educators who work with disadvantaged children. Called VVersterk, the programme trains thousands of ECEC staff through courses, workshops, conferences, and digital support materials. Day care and preschool staff working with programmes that target low-income and minority children also work with different organisations that implement training and coaching programmes related to these challenges. There are five comprehensive education programmes that have been implemented on a large scale in preschools and kindergartens that focus specifically on low-income and ethnic or language minority populations. Currently, 98% of preschools (for two- to four-year-olds) and 73% of day care centres (up to the age of two) that receive socially disadvantaged children work with one of these programmes. The largest of such programmes, used in 33% of cases, is the Dutch programme *Piramide*, which integrates nursery school and kindergarten content for three- to six-year-olds who need extra support (Helmerhorst, 2014). Internationally developed programmes such as High Scope (called *Kaleidoscoop* in Dutch) are also integrated, as well as several local programmes, which have also been developed to solely focus on Dutch language skills. In addition, the Opportunities for Development through the Quality and Education Act of 2010 (*Ontwikkelingskansen door Kwaliteit en Educatie,* OKE) requested that preschools and day care centres take measures to assist socially disadvantaged children, such as by implementing one of the five major programmes. Furthermore, as a part of ECEC staff's role in targeted programmes for disadvantaged children, more specific goals on language, motor skills, and cognitive and social development are also specified. As a whole, the Dutch system addresses both officially and in practice issues related to the vulnerable in ECEC, which encompass a whole range of recognised disadvantages, to which investments are targeted, including professional development.

Therefore, although each country clearly acknowledges the vulnerable in their ECEC systems, recognition of who they are and what their disadvantages are is not unified. As a result, there are targeted programmes and pre-service professional development that address the vulnerable, but very few ECEC systems that take on the challenges in a system-wide approach. The range within, and near

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[90] More information can be obtained at www.dgidc.min-edu.pt/teip/

invisibility of, disadvantage, in countries like Finland and Poland, compared with the coordinated recognition and investment found in the Netherlands, tell the story of very different methods of dealing with the vulnerable, and not necessarily if and how the vulnerable pose challenges. The question thus remains as to best practices in this domain, the effectiveness of such programmes on high quality ECEC and the impact on child development.

Additional insight 3:
Professional development networks and communities of practice

The third insight is drawn from a type of professional development based on a theoretical approach to active learning (Ellström, 2010) and the idea that learning is an interactive process, as for instance developed in the theory of 'communities of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al., 2002), and later in theoretical approaches to organisational learning (Gherardi, 2011), as mentioned in the introductory parts of this report. Communities of practice are where groups of educators exchange ideas, reflect and support each other in order to develop and improve their practices through knowledge-sharing and translating knowledge into practice, forming a learning community. The idea is that a community, formed through close collaboration, can foster an ongoing renewal of the practices of ECEC, while also unburdening the ECEC system in structural ways, such as through professional development courses, for instance. One-day courses have been criticised for their ineffectiveness, while, as we have seen from the examples in our individual country analyses, supervisory and mentoring approaches to professional development have a great impact on the quality of ECEC. Communities of practice also promote reflective practice, and as we have seen from Additional insight 1: Reflection in practice, this has deep and wide implications for ECEC. Also, through networks, the responsibility and practice of ECEC renewal (innovation) is elevated from being the individual's to the community's.

We have seen positive effects of the communities of practice approach to in-service professional development from two recent Danish programmes, the ASP-project (Jensen et al., 2013), and the VIDA approach to professional development (Brandi & Jensen, 2014; Jensen, 2014; Jensen et al., 2015). In Germany, networks depend largely on demographic and federal states, allowing for professional networking, best practice exchanges and practical support. The largest providers are from teacher and staff associations (e.g. churches). In Portugal, ECEC staff may choose to become members of APEI[91], the Portuguese Association of Early Childhood Education Professionals, entitling them to receive ECEC-related journals and information (including professional development opportunities). Further to this, @rcaComum[92] is an online Ibero-American community for preschool education professionals that can be considered a community of practice (see Pinto, 2009). And, within particular educational movements and frameworks, such as the Modern School Movement (Movimento da Escola Moderna[93]), ECEC staff can also join particular networks, including cooperative training systems. In Finland, there is support for societal awareness and collaboration with internal and external networks (regular contact and cooperation with working life networks) – which is one of the five guiding principles in the pre-service professional development of kindergarten educators in the Department of Education at the University of Jyväskylä. Furthermore, ECEC centres cooperate closely, particularly if they are located in proximity to one another, and they may establish their own networks. In the city of Jyväskylä's regulation (Jyväskylä, 2014), ECEC staff is mentioned as the 'key element in maintaining high quality ECEC. The goal is to establish working communities which are competent and open to

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[91] For more information, see www.apei.pt

[92] For more information, see www.arcacomum.pt/ and as well as the facebook page at www.facebook.com/arcacomum?fref=ts

[93] For more information, see www.movimentoescolamoderna.pt

changes and where individual work is made transparent for different collaborators and subjected to evaluation' (ibid., p. 23), emphasising again the central role of communities of practice.

In England, many professional associations have a training function as well as an employee rights function for ECEC staff. These have low fees and almost all educators belong to one of them, either as individuals or through their ECEC centres. They hold workshops, meetings, and increasingly offer on-line courses or webinars[94], which are particular sources for informal and non-formal ongoing professional development. In Italy, communities of practice are used to solve problems related to the current lack of resources, stimulating different forms of evaluation where a key feature for the development of a monitoring system is the network of coordinators, which currently only exists in two regions: Tuscany and Emilia Romagna.

As a whole, the above are examples of how communities of practice are increasingly important in informing ECEC staff, promoting a culture of collaboration, evaluation and critical reflection, and also creating opportunities for ongoing, sustainable renewal and innovation of ECEC systems in Europe.

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[94] See for example, the websites for Early Education at www.early-education.org.uk, and the National Day Nursery Association at www.ndna.org.uk

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V. Conclusion

In this part of the report, we conclude on the three main questions addressed:

1. Are countries' policies and professional development systems (pre-service and in-service) aimed at strengthening educational attainment and competence development among ECEC staff likely to lead to improved professional competences in meeting the range of demands and challenges of today's societies?
2. To what extent are professional development systems responding to increasing expectations that ECEC staff are able to identify and implement standards for high-quality services and meet children's needs, both in general and for the most vulnerable?
3. Which conditions (e.g. resources, policy and local authorities' prioritisation of high-level services) are provided for professional competence development (pre-service) and for sustainable workforce development (in-service), and to what extent are innovative approaches to ECEC systems under development in CARE's participating European countries?

Following this, we will reflect on the challenges our analyses highlight for future policy, practice and research development.

Regarding the first question: there are considerable variations in patterns of professional development among ECEC staff in European countries with regard to pre-service education. Several countries' reforms of ECEC staff qualifications emphasise that traditional knowledge and skills are not sufficient. Instead, staff also need to develop the ability to apply knowledge and implement ideas and skills into practice. Pre-service professional development in several countries is considered as part of a comprehensive system of factors that contribute to staff quality and thereby contribute to enhance high-quality provision in ECEC, hopefully with high impact on child development. We have seen several examples of good practices based on implementing high quality programmes; however there is still a lack of evidence on the question of whether new approaches to pre-service professional development are more likely to improve child outcomes. Recent educational reforms assume to improve ECEC staff's opportunities for developing comprehensive competences. As professional competence development also includes social and cultural competence, attitudes and competence to implement curricula, and early learning goals, as well as competences to implement and critical reflect on research and evidence of best practice, such competences also need to be addressed within the pre-service professional development system. Some countries are paying more and more attention to these aspects of competence development, and future research will shed light on the impact of new types of comprehensive professional development approaches in terms of quality enhancement and child outcomes. **WP3's recommendation is thus to support new evidence-based longitudinal studies to more adequately address the strengthening of ECEC educators' competences with the aim of improving child outcomes.**

Regarding the second question: To what extent are professional development systems responding to increasing expectations that ECEC staff are able to identify and implement standards for high-quality services and meet children's needs, both in general and for the most vulnerable? We have seen (part I and II), that there exists a substantial body of literature and ongoing studies linking aspects of in-service professional development to child outcomes, including cognitive, language, social and emotional, and educational development, as well as more general indicators of learning and wellbeing. However this research is far from equivocal and clear, which means that ECEC staff need to be

educated, not in specific methods or programmes, but instead education must lead to an ability to use knowledge in practice, and in new creative and innovative ways, in order to be able to enhance high-quality ECEC in relation to culture and context. Additionally, although research provides us with mixed results, it is nevertheless possible to suggest that child development depends on the quality of educational opportunities, and by extension, on the professional development of ECEC staff. We see a lot of promise in terms of reflective practice and the use of communities of practice in integrating an ongoing renewal of approaches and practices. Coupled with the engagement of stakeholders in ECEC (e.g. parents, community leaders, ECEC networks, etc.), the needs of the most vulnerable can more easily be identified and addressed – not as discrete activities, but as a part of ECEC structures and processes.

The CARE project has recently issued an ECEC impact review that concludes positively as to the potential of ECEC to improve development and to create more equal opportunities. This report includes research from many other countries, including the US, and also shows mixed findings. But, there is an overall affirmation of ECEC's potential impact (Melhuish et al., in press). In European countries, the literature is more sparse; however, results from this comparative review of professional development systems and approaches, based on the 10 individual European country analyses, provide examples of promising efforts to improve ECEC quality, both structurally and processual, through new ECEC in-service training provision. We know from research that process quality, e.g. positive interactions between children and adults, is the most important factor to improving child outcomes in general and among socially disadvantaged children in particular. The analyses provided here showed that there is still a challenge to improving high quality efforts regarding the most vulnerable. **WP3's recommendation is to undertake more comprehensive and focused studies on who the 'vulnerable' are across Europe and working with ECEC educators to globally enhance process quality.**

Regarding the third question: Which conditions (e.g. resources, policy and local authorities' prioritisation of high-level services) are provided for professional competence development (pre-service) and for sustainable workforce development (in-service), and to what extent are innovative approaches to ECEC systems under development in CARE's participating European countries? this report shows that several initiatives have been taken to raise ECEC staff's knowledge and skills, and overall competences to implement high quality ECEC in day care. However, findings also show that resources and support at the policy or municipal level may be deficient or absent (in some countries). Given the stimulus ignited by reported innovative approaches in the countries studied herein, resources and support for ECEC enhancement must be complemented by innovation within systems of professional development in ECEC. **WP3's recommendation is for policy to better support the creation and uses of innovative practices by fostering greater interaction between policymakers, research communities and ECEC educators and leaders.**

Regarding the analyses of innovation in the professional development systems across Europe we found examples of innovative ECEC systems on three levels: a system, or macro-level; a network, inter-organisational or meso-level; and an individual, organisational or micro-level. Further research and analyses are needed in order to evidence the positive impacts of innovative approaches, and thereby improve our understanding of the future effectiveness of ECEC professional capacities. This would lead to greater ECEC quality, and thereby improved child development.

WP3 case studies (D3.3) of innovative and exemplary approaches to the professional development of ECEC staff in Denmark, Italy and Poland will shed further light on such new approaches in the systems of professional development, especially by identifying the interplay between pre-service and ongoing in-service professional development and the impact on ECEC quality. These case studies will contribute to expanding our understanding of innovation in ECEC: how it is conceptualised and translated into renewed ECEC practices and WP3 3.2 studies will shed ligtht over the impact of professional development on high quality ECEC and childcomes through meta-reviews.

VI. Appendix

A. Questionnaire

WP3

What are the standards and discourses of professional development (pre-service and in-service) in your country?

Country: _____

Introduction

1. Which qualification standards are mandatory in the national curriculum or similar statutory (quality) requirements in your country for professionals working in day care, preschool, kindergarten, and the early grades of primary school? Please, specify the answers regarding age groups of children (birth-2 yrs and 3-6 yrs).

2. Could you provide us with an overview of the main components of the pre-service education and training system for early years professionals, differentiating between the different subsystems of ECEC and the age groups involved? Please, pay attention to entry requirements, duration of the programmes, final level of education/diploma, degree of specialisation on early childhood/working with young children and their families, the use of internships in practice, et cetera.

3. Could you provide us with a snapshot (that is, your personal but informed view) characterising the professional development of ECEC practitioners in your country, both with respect to the pre-service education and training system and with regard to activities of in-service training and development, and could you briefly summarise the national discourses on the main strengths and weaknesses of the entire professional development system for early years professionals in your country?

Policy and curriculum

4. Please briefly summarise recent developments in policy and policy-related debates regarding staff qualifications, professional development, required staffing levels et cetera in relation to ECEC in your country.

5. How does the national curriculum (or the national set of quality regulations) address the teacher's role, responsibility and qualifications in order to implement the national curriculum or to meet the required quality standards?

6. How does the curriculum of the pre-service education and training of ECEC practitioners address issues of implementing the national curriculum (or similar national standards) and, related to that, the issue of ECEC quality? Which quality concept is presented in pre-service education and training?

Resources and quality assurance

7. Which organisations provide professional development (e.g. government, local authorities, teacher training colleges, private organisations, a combination) in terms of funding, delivery and determining content?

8. Which resources are reserved for in-service training of ECEC practitioners? e.g. is there earmarked public funding, are there statutory requirements for private day care facilities to invest a proportion of turnover in training activities? Do ECEC organisations (both public and private non-profit or for profit organisations) reserve budget for professional development – can you give an indication of the percentage of the annual turnover that is spent on professional development?

9. Which tendencies towards cutbacks or increased spending on professional development within ECEC do you see in your country?

10. Could you describe the regulation and quality monitoring and assurance systems of professional development in your country, if any – which government body/bodies are responsible? Is there something like a national 'strategy' to improve professional development in ECEC?

Sources of information

11. Are there any evaluations of the system(s) of professional development, pre-service education and/or in-service training available in your country? Which reviews, evaluations, longitudinal studies or intervention studies conducted in your country are available regarding the impact of professional development on quality and/or child outcomes? Please summarise the results briefly and send references and/or links if available.

12. Are there to your knowledge promising, innovative approaches to in-service professional development of ECEC professionals in your country? Please, provide us with examples of these new/innovative approaches, if any *(With innovative approaches we mean inter alia professional development programmes that go beyond short-term, specialised on-the -job training courses, but instead have a long-term/life-long learning perspective).*

13. Are there examples of in-service professional development programmes in your country focusing on ECEC practitioners' competences to analyse, reflect on and further develop a knowledge-based practice through professional development programmes?

B. Review protocol

Review method

In order to gain an overview of the research in the field and answer the research questions, the review is based on 1) recent studies of professional development and child development, and 2) research on professional development and socially disadvantaged children as well.

Stages in the review process

The framework for the review consisted of eight steps:
1. Protocol. defining keywords, search strings, search strategies, searching for studies
2. Importing studies to the tools of reviewing
3. Screening studies on title and abstract, screening on full report
4. Describing the studies using the data extraction tool
5. Analyses
6. Mapping and refining the scope
7. Synthesising
8. Reporting results

Inclusion criteria
- Countries: Included were studies from a number of European countries (also Nordic), the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, but also studies from other countries as long that they have been published in peer-reviewed journals or as reports.
- Language: English.
- Types of publication published in peer-reviewed journals.
- Methodology: Studies that were based on experimental designs, quasi-experimental designs, and pre/post with comparison groups, without comparison group, descriptive/longitudinal and using quantitative design were included.
- Time: No restrictions. However focus was on the most recent studies (studies from 2000 and later).
- Age of children: 0-6 years.
- Early educator: includes preschool teachers and early childhood educators, kindergarten teachers, prekindergarten teachers, child care staff.
- Professional development programmes: The intervention must be delivered in ECEC settings, must be described and be in the form of an intervention/ treatment, education, pre-service, in-service, training, classes, in-class curriculum, or other activities that improve early educator's competences (knowledge, learning, practice, change) and or child development.
- Professional development programmes emphasising parent involvement were not excluded.
- Assessments of effectiveness: measures/evaluations of changes in three areas are required.
- Outcomes: Early educators' knowledge, practice (competence, qualification development) and child outcomes.

Search words

We used the following key words: 1) Professional development (training, early edu (education)), practice, innovation, 2) early educator (preschool teacher, professional, childcare staff), Daycare (child care, preschool) and curriculum . Final search strings were "Professional development" AND "Early edu", "Professional development" AND "Early edu" AND "practice" and "Professional development" AND "Early edu" AND "innovative".

Searches in relevant databases

The following databases were searched by The Danish Library, Aarhus University1) Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), 2) Australian Education Index (AUEI), 3) British Education Index (BREI), 4) The Campbell Library, http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/lib/, 5) Scopus, 6) Evidensbasen (Dansk Clearinghouse for Uddannelsesforskning – the International Evidence base), 7) Nordic Base of Early Childhood Education and Care (NB-ECEC, http://www.nb- ecec.org/, 7) American Psychological Association's database (PsycInfo), and 8) Sociological Sciences Abstracts.