



At the launch of the CECDE on October 31, 2002

Welcome...

...to our first newsletter of 2003! This edition will keep you informed on two of our current activities: the audit of Irish research in the field of early childhood care and education and the audit of Provision of Services to alleviate educational disadvantage and to address special needs. Both of these projects are progressing well and we expect to publish full reports within this year.

Our team is now almost complete. Dr. Gemma Kiernan has joined us as Assistant Director and Mr Peadar Cassidy will begin working as Information Officer shortly.

Heino Schonfeld
Director

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Our new Assistant Director

Dr. Gemma Kiernan has been appointed as Assistant Director with the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education and commenced her work on January 27th.

Dr Kiernan was awarded a Ph.D. in Psychology from Trinity College, Dublin in 2000.

She previously worked with the Barretstown Gang Camp as Senior Staff Director and with Barnardos as Organisational Development Manager.

We are delighted to have her on board!

Conferences & Events

IPPA Spring Conference, 22nd May, 2003, Info: 01 4630010

Childminding Ireland, AGM & Conference, March 29th, 2003, Lucan Spa Hotel.

World Forum on Early Care and Education, May 13-16, 2003, Acapulco, Mexico

OMEP Conference, UCC, April 5, 2003, Info: lcrossan@education.ucc.ie

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Who are we?

In 2001 the Minister for Education and Science asked the Dublin Institute of Technology and St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra to jointly establish the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education. The aim of the CECDE is to develop and co-ordinate early childhood education in pursuance of the objectives of the White Paper 'Ready to Learn' and to advise the Department of Education and Science on policy issues in this area. The Centre's brief covers children from 0 to 6 years of age in a wide variety of settings, including families, nurseries, crèches, playgroups, child minders, preschools and the infant classes of primary schools.

The main **objectives** of the Centre are:

- To develop a quality framework for early childhood education,
- To develop targeted interventions on a pilot basis for children who are educationally disadvantaged and children with special needs; and
- To prepare the groundwork for the establishment of an Early Childhood Education Agency as envisaged by the White Paper.

Within this context, the **functions** of the Centre are:

- To develop early education quality standards in relation to all aspects of early childhood education including equipment and material, staff qualifications, training, learning objectives, teaching methodologies, curriculum and related areas;
- To develop a support framework to encourage compliance with quality standards by early education providers;
- To co-ordinate and enhance early education provision, including parental involvement, with a particular focus on disadvantaged and special needs groups;
- To undertake and/or commission research and development through which best practice in curriculum, teaching methodology and parent involvement may be implemented and evaluated.

The Centre will develop **standards and guidelines** in the following areas of early childhood development and education:

- Equipment and materials
- Staff and qualifications
- Curriculum and methodology
- Parental involvement

Quality early educational and care experiences provide not just a pretext for lifelong learning, but are valued as essential responses to children's needs and rights. The CECDE's brief is comprehensive and bridges many traditional divides. The Centre, in carrying out its functions, will consult on an ongoing basis with relevant agencies, groups, advisory bodies and providers of early childhood education. To this end, a Consultative Committee will be established shortly to inform interested participants of developments in relation to the project; to give them the opportunity to present their views and to provide a forum for discussion of issues related to early childhood education.

For further information contact:

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Audit of Provision of Services to alleviate educational disadvantage and to address special needs

The Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education has embarked on a project to map the provision of services for children at risk of or experiencing educational disadvantage, and services for children with special needs in the age range 0-6 years. The purpose of the audit is to provide baseline information which can be developed in the future by further research.

Gathering information

Information gathering is at an advanced stage. We began the process by writing to a very broad range of bodies associated with provision of services, whether as a funding provider, service provider, co-ordinating body or umbrella body. We contacted organisations at local and national level so as to have the widest possible information base.

We asked for baseline information - location, age range, duration of service and purpose of service. We hoped that those not directly involved with service provision but who had information on groups of services would send us the information directly. Data of this type is proving very helpful as it allows us to build a more comprehensive picture, and to cross reference with individual responses.

We are most grateful to all those individuals and groups who took the time out of busy schedules to reply to our letters, and who phoned to discuss the project. We would welcome any further replies to our original letters, and would be delighted to offer further clarification to anyone who would like to pass along information at this stage.

Purpose of the project

The Centre will publish the Audit later this year, and also make it available online. We see these publications as the beginning of the development of a national database of services. Such a database will facilitate planning, matching provision to need and promoting adequate services. The process of the audit and the information collected will also provide the impetus and structure for further, more detailed research.

Conclusion

While this is the first step towards a national database of provision for disadvantaged children and children with special needs across all sectors, we would hope to be as

comprehensive as possible. In particular we would like the audit to reflect activity in every sector and in every county, and to reflect the efforts of all those involved. We hope that all those who are involved will not hide their lights under bushels and will continue to keep up the stream of information!

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Research Audit

The Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education is in the process of conducting a research audit in relation to early childhood education and care in Ireland. The specific remit of the audit is children in the 0-6 years of age category, thus including the infant classes of primary schools. This audit is the first collation of the wide range of material that is available in the Irish context and will prove a valuable reference resource for professionals, practitioners and researchers in the field.

We are surprised and delighted at the vast number of research items that have emerged in the course of this work. The terms of reference of the audit have been limited to Irish research conducted since 1990, owing to the magnitude of material available. It is hoped that the experience and expertise of the preceding period will have been distilled and carried forward in subsequent publications. To date, in excess of 900 publications have been collected, including books, articles, postgraduate theses, conference papers and journal articles.

The collected research publications are being collated at present by categorising and further sub-dividing them into a number of themes including:

- Children's Rights
- Curriculum
- Disadvantage
- Diversity
- Early Childhood Education and Care
- Irish Language Education
- Parental Involvement
- Quality
- Sociological/ Historical
- Special Needs
- Training and Qualifications

Progress on the research audit is at an advanced stage and publication is expected in May of this year. The audit will also be available as a searchable database on the CECDE website when it becomes operational. This will make it possible to keep the database current at all times.

If you have any suggestions for materials or publications that should be included in the audit, please contact

Thomas.walsh@spd.dcu.ie at the Centre.

