

Alana

Newsletter of the Centre for Early Childhood Development & Education

EDITORIAL BY DR. GEMMA KIERNAN, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, CECDE

Welcome to the Spring 2004 edition of Alana. As the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education makes progress in developing and co-ordinating early childhood care and education in Ireland, we are committed to ensuring that our work is underpinned by a comprehensive programme of research.

In meeting our objective of developing a quality framework for early childhood care and education, we have recently completed an analytical review of national and international policies, practices and research related to quality. In addition, we are currently preparing a conceptual framework examining what facilitates young children's optimal development and learning in Ireland. Both the analytical review and the conceptual framework are at an advanced stage of drafting and will be published this summer for public consultation. Such research provides us with a sound evidential basis for our work, ensuring that it is substantiated by valid, reliable information and findings.

In relation to our objective of developing targeted interventions on a pilot basis for children who are educationally disadvantaged and children with special needs, we undertook initial baseline research to audit existing service provision in these areas. Our findings will be published this month in a report "On Target? An Audit of Provision of Services Targeting Disadvantage and Special Needs among Children aged Birth to Six in Ireland". Building on this research, we have recently commissioned a number of large scale research projects focusing on areas such as dispersed disadvantage, early intervention for children with special needs in diverse settings, the development of models of good practices that can be disseminated to all Early Start centres and to other early years settings, the development of an in-career development programme for teachers and management in Traveller pre-schools and an investigation of perspectives, notably children's perspectives, on the meaning of quality in early years settings. You can read about "On Target" and the various research projects on our website www.cecde.ie. In undertaking such research, we are cognisant of the value of a strong relationship between research, practice and policy.

Our final objective is, of course, to prepare the groundwork for an Early Education Agency. It is anticipated in the White Paper 'Ready to Learn' (1999) that one of the many functions of the Agency will be research, development and dissemination of best practice. Given this, we are dedicated to enhancing the research capacity of the early childhood care and education sector. In addition to working in close

collaboration with a number of organisations to support their research initiatives, we are funding four doctoral studentships at DIT and St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra. This edition of Alana gives you a flavour of the nature of the doctoral research being undertaken.

We believe that dissemination is key to effective research. As such, we will continue to be active in communicating the nature of our research and our research findings to you, through a variety of book and journal publications, our website and through conference presentations. We are especially looking forward to our international conference in Dublin Castle this September 'Questions of Quality'. It will provide us with a unique opportunity to debate and discuss research, practices and policies relating to quality from around the globe.

We hope you enjoy this edition of Alana and the insight it gives you about aspects of our research programme. We wish you all a very pleasant.....and hopefully sunny summer!

Dr Gemma Kiernan
Assistant Director

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CECDE RESEARCH STUDENTS: PROGRESS UPDATE

We are pleased to announce that we have recruited two more PhD students as part of our Research Strategy to complement and strengthen the research capacity of the Early Childhood Care and Education Sector. Details of all four students are hosted on our website, as well as an update on their work to date.

Carmel Brennan

Carmel works with IPPA, the Early Childhood Organisation and is responsible for the on-going development and co-ordination of the IPPA Quality Improvement Programmes. She has worked as a teacher, a playgroup (Naionra) provider and a Childcare Advisor. She has completed her M.A. in Education with the Open University and is undertaking her PhD studies on 'The Case for Play', an area of particular interest to IPPA. The study is being supervised by Noirin Hayes of the DIT.

Mary Irving

Mary is Teaching Principal of St. Catherine's Infant School in Cabra, Dublin 7. She has recently completed an MSc in Psychology with the Open University, and also is an Associate Lecturer of Child Development with the Open University. Mary is undertaking her PhD studies on Assessment in Early Childhood Education and is supervised by Dr. Gemma Kiernan of the CECDE and Dr. Mark Morgan of St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra.

For abstracts on both new Research Students' work as well as Anne Boyle's "Parental Involvement in Early Years Education, with a particular focus on Travellers" and Mary O'Kane's "Building Bridges: An Investigation into the Transition from Preschool to School for Children in Ireland", please check out our website at http://www.cecde.ie/english/research_students.php.

NEW CECDE PUBLICATIONS

The CECDE Annual Review 2002/2003, *On Target?* and *Talking About Quality, Report of a Consultation Process on Quality in Early Childhood Care and Education* are now available on our website www.cecde.ie or directly from the Centre.

FOUR PROJECTS ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN WHO ARE EDUCATIONALLY DISADVANTAGED AND OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

One of the main objectives of the CECDE is "to develop targeted interventions on a pilot basis for children who are educationally disadvantaged and children with special needs".

While the projects arising from this objective primarily focus on children who experience disadvantage or who have special needs, it is important to point out that each project will generate universally applicable knowledge. The evidence and learning gained from the projects will benefit the development of quality early childhood care and education for all children in Ireland.

Project 1, In Search of Quality: Multiple Perspectives

In developing a quality framework for early childhood care and education in Ireland it is of crucial importance for the CECDE to develop methodologies to capture these multiple perspectives of quality – particular the perspective of children.

In light of this, the purpose of this project is to gain a greater understanding of quality in the Irish context, in particular to access multiple perspectives on the meaning of quality within early childhood care and education settings in Ireland.

Project 2, Early Intervention for Children with Special Needs in Diverse Settings

The purpose of this project is to offer a high quality intervention to three year old children with special needs in three different settings. Two of the settings are a specialised class in a special school for children with disabilities and a community playgroup. The third setting may be identified to include a balanced ratio of children with disabilities and children with typical development, in a pre-school class, in a mainstream school.

Project 3, An In-Career Development Programme for Teachers and Management in Pre-Schools for Travellers

The recent National Evaluation Report on Pre-schools for Travellers (DES, 2003) found a significant need for in-service training among both the teachers and members of the management committees of these pre-schools.

The purpose of this project is to develop and implement an in-career development programme for the teachers and members of the management committees of Traveller Pre-Schools.

Project 4, Early Start Integration Project

The purpose of this project is to develop specific models of best practice in well defined areas of activity which can be disseminated to all Early Start centres, and to the wider early childhood care and education [ECCE] sector.

Administration of the Projects

The CECDE will have overall responsibility to administer, coordinate and supervise the delivery of the projects. For this purpose a **Project Coordinator, Annette McDonnell**, and a **Project Secretary, Jennifer Mangan**, have been appointed to the CECDE and will work closely with the individuals and organizations delivering the four projects.

The CECDE will establish an Advisory Board with participants from relevant Government Departments, particularly the Department of Education and Science as well as academic advisors. The Advisory Board will work with the projects through the project Coordinator.

All four projects will be subject to an independent evaluation.

More information will be hosted on our website www.cecde.ie through the course of the projects.

EXCERPTS FROM RECENT PRESENTATIONS BY CECDE STAFF

Full versions of each of these presentations can be found on our website at www.cecde.ie

Opening Address to the OMEP Ireland Conference 2004 By Heino Schonfeld, Director, CECDE

I would like to concentrate on three questions which I believe are of major consequence and have implications for the way we want to develop early childhood care and education in Ireland. These are: (1) Is childhood sufficiently uniform across the globe with universal needs and rights demanding a global response? (2) Why is the answer to the first question important for our response to the needs of young children in Ireland? (3) How is the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education approaching the development of a National Quality Framework for young children here in Ireland?

When Two are One: The Changing Nature of Early Childhood Care and Education in Ireland Presentation to ESAI Conference 2004 by Thomas Walsh, Development Officer and Gemma Kiernan, Assistant Director, CECDE

There is increasing recognition at policy, practice and research level in Ireland that care and education are inextricably linked in the lives of children, including young children. Historically however, young children's care and education were treated as separate entities, with 'care' provided within the home and 'education' outside the home. Societal changes towards the end of the twentieth century catalysed a transformation in the conceptualisation of early childhood care and education. Young children's learning became increasingly viewed as a continuum from birth; care and education being interdependent. This perspective has been reinforced by the establishment of the CECDE with a core remit to develop overarching quality standards in relation to all aspects of early learning.

Consultation on Quality Presentation to OMEP Conference 2004 by Maresa Duignan, Development Officer, CECDE

Early childhood care and education in Ireland is in the process of dynamic change and development. Effective management of change requires that all stakeholders are involved in development, implementation and evaluation processes. Consultation is a critical element in ensuring this sense of involvement. This paper outlines the first phase of the national consultative process employed by the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE), towards the formulation of a national quality framework, (including standards, assessment and support mechanisms), for all settings in Ireland where children aged birth to six years are present. The purpose of the consultation was to establish baseline perceptions among all stakeholders in relation to quality. The report outlines the rationale, methodology and key findings of the consultation exercise. These findings are then examined in terms of their implications for the development of a national quality framework for early childhood care and education in Ireland.

On Target? Presentation of findings from an Audit of Services Targeting Disadvantage and Special Needs among children aged birth to six in Ireland Presentation to OMEP Conference 2004 by Jacqueline Fallon, Development Officer, CECDE

The Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE) has a particular focus on the needs of children who experience disadvantage and/or special needs. Given this, an audit of services targeting disadvantage and special needs among children from birth to six years was conducted. This paper presents the rationale for the Audit, which relates to the need for reliable data on which to base policy and provision, along with the major findings. While data on provision is not available in a planned or systematic way, the CECDE has assembled a database of approximately 1,400 services, illustrated via maps. The findings were used to generate recommendations for policy in early childhood care and education in Ireland.

Booking forms are now available for our forthcoming International Conference, 'Questions of Quality' to be held in Dublin Castle, September 23rd-25th 2004!

Registration Fees:

Early registration fee €295 per delegate

Later registration fee after 23rd August 2004 €395 per delegate

Fee includes full day attendance, lunch and all conference materials. Gala dinner extra.

For a registration form, please contact:

Sinead Marrinan, Conference Partners Ltd.
Tel: +353 1 667 7188
Email: sinead@conferencepartners.ie

Or register online at our website
www.cecde.ie.

Outline Programme:

Thursday 23rd September

7.00 pm Registration & Welcome Reception in The State Apartments, Dublin Castle.

Friday 24th September

9.00 am Registration

9.30 am Opening Address by Mr. Noel Dempsey,
Minister for Education & Science

10.00 am Keynote Speaker – Professor Tricia David

11.00 am Tea/Coffee

11.30 am Workshops – Defining Quality

1.00 pm Lunch

2.30 pm Keynote Speaker – Dr. Mathias Urban

3.30 pm Tea/Coffee

4.00 pm Workshops – Assessing Quality

5.30 pm Close

8.00 pm Gala Dinner, St. Patrick's Hall, Dublin Castle

Saturday 25th September

9.00 am Keynote Speaker - Dr Richard Clifford

10.00 am Tea/Coffee

10.30 am Workshops - Supporting Quality

12.00 pm Panel Discussion and feedback from
workshops

12.50 pm Conference Close - Nóirín Hayes

1.30 pm Lunch

Full details on workshops will be available from our website.

CECDE staff and OMEP delegates visit St. Bridget's Junior School, Finglas...

CECDE staff (Gemma Kiernan and Annette McDonnell) and OMEP delegates had the pleasure of visiting St Bridget's Junior School in Finglas on Friday 23rd April. We were warmly welcomed by the principal Carmel Lillis, the Home School Liaison Teacher Cepta Ball and by all of the teachers and children. Some of the highlights included a visit to Early Start, a Maths for Fun group involving infants and their parents, a mother and Toddler group, and a music performance by First class.

A sincere thank you to Carmel and all of the teachers and children in St Bridget's for an informative and inspiring visit.

...and St. Andrew's Childcare Centre, Pearse Street

Maresa Duignan, Development Officer with the

CECDE, and OMEP delegates from the UK, Sweden and Denmark, were welcomed to St. Andrew's Childcare Centre, Pearse Street, by Una Caffrey, Manager, and her staff. Highlights of the visit included a visit to the newly-opened relaxation room and the IT room. The children treated guests to wonderful displays of their singing!

Thank you to Una and all her team for an entertaining visit.