Colloque européen
24 & 25 Mars 2014
CERIA, Bruxelles

RIEPP asbl

Accueillir
la diversité
des familles ?

(M')enfin !

Bilan, pratiques et perspectives
pour un système d'éducation et d'accueil
des enfants de moins de 6 ans plus inclusif

Accueil
pour TOUS

It takes a village.
Towards competent systems in early
childhood education and care.

Mathias Urban
Director of
Early Childhood Research Centre
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It takes a village. Towards competent systems in early childhood education and care.

Accueillir la diversité des familles? (M')enfin!
RIEPP conference, Brussels 24th March 2014

Mathias Urban, University of Roehampton
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Outline

- Local, global, interconnected – some historical and political aspects of the 'social function' of early childhood care and education
- Characteristics of early childhood professional practice – a proposal
- Competent systems – findings from a European research collaboration
- Some implications for research, practice and policy

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It takes a village…

- … to raise a child – according to an overused proverb of uncertain origin. It has been colonised by many (including Hillary R Clinton)
- We should not use the image of the 'village' to romanticise childhood and lament the loss of the good old days (they weren't that good, really)
- Instead, we should take it as a starting point for an exploration of the complexities and contradictions, the challenges and possibilities of the support systems for children, their families and communities in our societies

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The 'village' has a history

„1. Alle Kinder der Landleute, Taglöhner und Handwerker, welche nicht mehr Säuglinge, aber noch unter sechs Jahren alt sind, und deren Eltern oder diejenigen, welche deren Stelle vertreten, durch ihre Beschäftigung außer dem Hause genöthigt werden, sie zu verlassen, ohne in der Lage zu seyn und die Mittel zu besitzen, für die angemessene Aufsicht Sorge zu tragen, sollen von den Monaten Mai bis October einschließlich, während der Arbeitszeit von Morgens 6 bis Abends 6 Uhr, der Obhut der Stadträthe oder Ortsvorgesetzten anvertraut werden.“[7]

Decree issued by His Royal Highness,
Prince Elector of the Holy Roman Empire at Hessen-Cassel, 1825

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The global 'village' has unexpected inhabitants

'As Former Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, it's clear to us that our military readiness could be put in jeopardy given the fact that **nearly 75 percent of young Americans are unable to serve in uniform**. We joined Mission: Readiness because we believe that investing in our children through **early education** is not a Republican issue or Democratic issue. It's a plain common sense issue **critical to our National Security**.'

'Our national security in the year 2030 is absolutely dependent on what's going on in pre-kindergarten today. We urge Congress to take action on this issue this year.'

Generals John M. Shalikashvili, Henry H. Shelton
(US Army) and Rear Admiral James Barnett (US Navy)
emphasise the importance of early childhood education
http://www.missionreadiness.org/

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Status quo and change:
the dilemma with education

One of my concerns, at the time, as valid then as it is now, was with the political consequences of that kind of relationship between parents and children, which later becomes that between teachers and pupils, when it came to the learning process of our infant democracy. *It was as if family and school were so completely subjected to the greater context of global society that they could do nothing but reproduce the authoritarian ideology.*
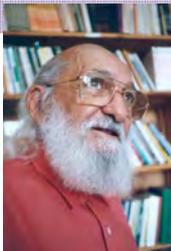
The revelatory, gnosiological practice of education does not itself effect the transformation of the world: but it implies it.

Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of Hope

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So, what about the future of the 'village'?

Each young child has a unique potential for development of human capacities, for communication and cooperation, for skill and feeling, for reason and imagination, for practicality and spirituality, for determination and compassion.

Through the care and education of young children, a society constructs and reconstructs community and economy, ensures continuity of tradition between generations, and makes innovation and transformation possible.

Martin Woodhead

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Early childhood care and education in times of crises

We are facing global challenges and life-threatening catastrophes including, but not limited to:

- the increasing danger posed by proliferation of nuclear weapons
- the global climate crisis, threatening, among others, to unleash unrest, conflict and mass-migration due to growing shortages of water, food and fuel
- the threat to biodiversity

- the impossibility of unlimited economic growth
- the dysfunctional economic and financial system.
  (Moss and Urban, 2010, p. 15)

A complex intersolidarity of problems, antagonisms, crises, uncontrolled processes, and the general crisis of the planet
(Edgar Morin)

We cannot continue as we are

- All of these challenges mean we cannot continue as we are, and they should provoke major democratic debate in all countries.
- In relation to education, the question of its purpose becomes even more critical and urgent.
- The dangers we face require spreading and deepening democratic values and practices, collaborative action and a willingness to think and act differently, trying new approaches: „more of the same" is no longer an option. (p. 16)

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A key role for the early childhood profession

- **Workforce is central for achieving policy goals of increasing both quantity and quality of provision** (Oberhuemer 2000, 2010; Siraj-Blatchford 2002; OECD, 2001, 2006; Dalli 2003, 2005; Mac Naughton 2005, Urban, 2008, 2009; Dalli & Urban, 2010, 2011; Eurydice, 2009)

- **Most countries face major workforce challenges: recruitment, retention, gender, qualification …** (OECD, 2006; CORE, 2011, Oberhuemer, 2010)

- **Required:**
  '…systemic approaches to professionalism…' (EU communication on ECEC, February 2011)

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Early childhood professionalism is 'different' – but how?

- There is a continued interest in 'professionalism' in policy and academic debates
- The ongoing debate (and a continuously increasing number of publications) indicates that the EC profession is finding its 'voice' and identity
E.g. 'A profession speaking – and thinking – for itself'
(Urban&Dalli 2011)
- Professionalism in our field cannot be understood (or developed) with traditional concepts and theories of 'profession'. This claim has always been an important aspect of the emancipatory debate in EC
(E.g. Urban, 2008, 2010, Miller, Dalli&Urban 2011)

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Professionalism in EC: 3 interconnected perspectives

1. **Early childhood professional practice is relational**
- It is done and developed **with**, not **to** children, families and communities
- They contribute to the 'outcomes' of our professional practice as much as we do.
- The challenge: How can we, as individuals as well as a profession, confidently develop professional identities based on equal relationships, respect and recognition?
(and confidently embrace the emancipatory, transformative possibilities …)

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Professionalism in EC:
3 interconnected perspectives

2. **Early childhood professional practice is political:**

- It is concerned with change and transformation, with more equitable and just outcomes for all children
- What these are is of course highly contested and challenges vested interests
- It requires constant political engagement (micro and macro-politics) based on democratic values (Moss&Urban, 2010)

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Professionalism in EC:
3 interconnected perspectives

3. **Early childhood professional practice is uncertain**

- In times of crises and transformation, all expert knowledge becomes questionable, its answers and solutions no longer viable
- 'Expertise' may well be part of the problem that has led to the crisis (e.g. education systems that systematically marginalise groups of children)
- There are no maps: 'We are all immigrants into a new territory' (Margaret Mead)
- This requires new understandings of 'knowledge' and how it is produced

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A critical ecology of the profession

- Early childhood professional practice is relational, political and uncertain
- This has implications for
  - the individual practitioner and her immediate work context
  - the EC institutions (practice, professional preparation, research)
  - governance (legislation, regulation) at local, national and international (EU) level
- Together they form a complex 'ecology of the profession'
  (Urban&Dalli 2007,2010, 2011)
- CORE outlines steps towards 'the competent system'
  (Urban, Vandenbroeck, Peeters, Van Laere & Lazzari, 2011)

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CORE – project outline

A comprehensive study on **Competence Requirements in Early Ehildhood Education and Care** - grounded in international research on quality, competences and professionalism in early childhood

- Review of European and international literature on 'competence', 'quality' and 'professionalism' – beyond the limited scope of English language literature and research
- Survey in 15 European countries
- 7 in-depth case studies
- Professional representation of most EU member states

Policy recommendations

University of East London / University of Ghent

in collaboration with key professional networks
DECET – ISSA – CiE – Education International

Funded by:
European Commission
Directorate General for Education and Culture

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CORE competence survey

- Belgium (Flemish and French speaking Communities), Croatia, Denmark, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom (England and Wales)
- Conducted in collaboration with locally based but internationally experienced researchers.
Aim: *factual information* and *informed interpretation*
- Thematic and phenomenological analysis

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CORE case studies

Freestanding-but-related, *framed* **rather than compared, 2-level analysis:**

- *Professional preparation of* Éducateurs Jeunes Enfants (EJE) *and apprenticeship for* auxiliaires de puériculture
Ecole Santé Social Sud-Est - Lyon, France

- *The Integrated Qualifications Framework and the Early Years Professional Status: a shift towards a graduate led workforce*
England

- *Pedagogical Guidance as pathway to professionalisation*
City of Gent, Belgium

- *Inter-professional collaboration in Preschool and Primary School contexts*
Slovenia

- *The Danish Pedagogue Education: principles, understandings and transformations of a generalist approach to professionalism*
Paedagoguddanelsen JYDSK, VIA University College - Denmark

- *Origins and evolution of professionalism in the context of municipal ECEC institutions*
City of Pistoia, Italy

- *Professional and competence development in the context of the "Where there are no preschools" (WTANP) project*
Poland

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CORE findings in a nutshell

- **Competence development is a process:**
  Professional competence conceptualised as
  continuous learning process from entering the field
  (as students or untrained workers) to the end of their
  career
- **Professionalisation is systemic:**
  Processes of professionalisation take place at
  different, interconnected levels:

  Individual   **Institutional**

  Inter-institutional   **Systems of governance**

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CORE findings (cont.):
Critical issues across Europe

- Multiple scenarios: competence profiles …
  - for both the profession and for professional education/training
  - only for the profession, not for professional education/training
  - only for professional education/training but not for the profession
  - neither for the profession nor for professional education/training
- Multiple issues…
  - individual vs. shared responsibility
  - responsibility of the labour-market versus responsibility of the training institutions
  - **the invisible assistants**

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Re-conceptualising 'competence': 'competent systems' needed

- 'Competence' is not simply the result of 'training' individuals
- 'Competence' develops and unfolds in relationships between individuals, teams, institutions and the wider context of community and society
- **Knowledge**, **practices** and underpinning **values** need to be coherent at all levels
- 'Competence' relates to working with children, families, and communities
- Developing competence requires joint learning and support systems

EU communication on ECEC (2011):

'Systemic approaches to professionalisation needed'

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TABLE II.

...ensions of competent systems (examples)

	Knowledge	Practices	Values
...viduals	Knowledge of various developmental aspects of children from a holistic perspective [...] Knowledge of working with parents and local communities (knowledge about families, poverty and diversity) [...]	Building strong pedagogical relationships with children, based on sensitive responsiveness [...] Analysing needs of local communities in order to work effectively with parents and disadvantaged groups [...]	Adopting a holistic vision of educati... that encompasses learning, care a... upbringing] [...] Adopting a democratic and inclusive approach to the education of young children in order to sustain social cohesion [...]
...itutions ...d teams	Knowledge of situated learning and 'communities of practice' [...]	Shared pedagogical frameworks to orient practitioners' work Arrange paid time for documentation, reflection and planning for all staff Framework for professional development [...]	Democracy and respect for diversity Understanding of professional developm... as continuous learning process that encompasses personal and professio... growth Understanding ECEC institutions as si... civil engagement
...r-institutional ...llaboration	Knowledge of inter-agency collaboration Knowledge of community development Cross-disciplinary knowledge(pedagogy, health, social policy . . .) [...]	Networking and systematic collaboration between ECEC institutions, primary schools, services for families, research and training institutions [...]	Interdisciplinarity and interprofessio... Democracy and respect for diversity [...]
...ernance	Children's rights Diversity in all its forms and anti-discriminatory practice Comprehensive strategies for tackling poverty and inequality [...]	Providing adequate resources to ensure equitable access to high quality ECEC for all children and families Integrated approaches to ECEC at local, regional and national level Supporting systemic professionalisation [...]	Children's right to active participatio... society Children's right to develop their full potential Education as a public good and public responsibility

Towards competent systems

1. **A radical shift of perspectives**

   A shift of perspectives: from the 'self' (Deleuze), the individual practitioner to the community, professional system and the reciprocal relationships between the various actors at the different layers of the system.
   (Urban, Vandenbroeck et al, 2011 / Miller, Dalli & Urban, 2012)

2. **Critical questions and trans-disciplinary dialogue**

   An ability to encourage and systematically create spaces for dialogue and for asking critical questions – at every layer of the system – and to value the multitude and diversity of answers as a key to creating new understandings
   ('practice-based evidence' , Urban, 2010)

3. **Transformative practices**

   Hope, as an ontological need (Paulo Freire): Educational practice is there for a purpose and it implies change. But the hoped-for has to be debated. Beyond the question of *what works* lie questions of value and purpose

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CORE policy recommendations
(at regional and national level)

At regional and national level:
- Ensure equal and reciprocal relationships between theory and practice
- Build leadership capacity
- Develop effective policies that address the entire ECEC system
- Re-think continuous professional development
- Increase job mobility
- Include assistants / paraprofessionals in systematic qualification routes

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Implications for future European research projects:

1. Empirical research and social and democratic experiments can – and should – go hand in hand
2. Empirical research can – and should – learn from dispute and from the margins
3. European early childhood research can - and should – be trans-disciplinary

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Competent systems at local level:
Quality Framework, City of Utrecht, The Netherlands

Uitgangspunten
De competente medewerker in een competente organisatie Kopjes veraneren

Een belangrijke bron voor de aanbevelingen op organisatieniveau is het **Europese CoRe-onderzoek** naar de vereiste competenties van organisaties en professionals in opvang- en educatievoorzieningen voor jonge kinderen. Het CoRe-onderzoek laat zien dat de **kwaliteit** van voorzieningen voor jonge kinderen niet primair afhankelijk is van de competentie van de individuele medewerkers, maar van competente medewerkers in een **competent systeem**, het team en de organisatie waarin zij werken.

(Van Keulen, Leseman et al 2012)

Utrechts kwaliteitskader voor educatie van het jonge kind

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Competent systems at the level of governance:
'Ländermonitor frühkindliche Bildungssysteme'
Bertelsmann Foundation, Germany

Annual report on developments and achievements in ECEC in 16 states ('Länder') now using CORE system approach as 'lens' for monitoring the system

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An inspiring example from Colombia:
Perfiles, competencias, necesidades de cualificación y condiciones sistémicas de apoyo al trabajo del talento humano en atención integral a la primera infancia
(CORE-C)

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CoRe report and further reading

CoRe Final Report
- Project outline
- Definition of key terms
- Findings
- Policy recommendations

CoRe Research Documents
- Literature review
- Detailed report on Survey
- Detailed report on Case studies
- Detailed appendices (data)

http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/2011/core_en.pdf

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Thank you!

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