Starting Strong

Curricula and Pedagogies

in

Early Childhood Education and Care

FIVE CURRICULUM OUTLINES

The terminology, facts and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the authors, and do not engage the responsibility of the OECD.

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Foreword

Curricula and Pedagogies in Early Childhood Education and Care is an output of the *Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy*, a project launched by OECD's Education Committee in March 1998. The impetus for the project came from the 1996 Ministerial meeting on *Making Lifelong Learning a Reality for All*. In their communiqué, the Education Ministers assigned a high priority to the goal of improving access to and quality in early childhood education and care, with the aim of strengthening the foundations of lifelong learning (OECD, 1998). To date, twenty-one countries have volunteered to participate in the review: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. A detailed description of the review's objectives, analytical framework, and methodology is provided in OECD (1998).

While the organisation of national reviews is the primary aim of the project, another important goal is to disseminate the knowledge and research base relevant to early childhood policy. With this purpose in mind, two workshops are organised each year for the early childhood policy makers attached to the ministries in participating countries. At these workshops, international exchanges take place, policy developments (what works) are discussed and major issues of research interest explored.

The present report stems from a workshop for the national coordinators of early childhood policy hosted by the Ministry of Education and Science in Stockholm, 11th – 13th June 2003. The topic for discussion was *Curricula and Pedagogies in Early Childhood Education*. Four well-known ECEC curricula were presented by their authors at the work-shop: *Reggio Emilia* by Dr. Carlina Rinaldi, *Te Whāriki* by Professor Helen May, *Experiential Education* by Professor Ferre Laevers and *High/Scope®* by Dr. Dave Weikart. Since the work-shop was held in Sweden and introduced by the Minister of Preschool, Lena Hallengren, the *Swedish Curriculum* is also presented in this paper by Professor Ingrid Pramling, who – in association with Ph.D. Sonja Sheridan and Ph.D. Pia Williams from Göteborg University - also prepared the second chapter of this report.

The report outlines each of these curricula, using in so far as possible the written documents supplied by our speakers. We are extremely grateful to them, and trust that this outline of curriculum approaches will prove useful to policy makers in OECD countries and beyond.

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FIVE CURRICULUM OUTLINES

1. Experiential Education - Effective learning through well-being and involvement

(The following text has been supplied by Professor Ferre Laevers, Leuven University, Research Centre for Experiential Education)

1. In May 1976 twelve Flemish pre-school teachers, assisted by two educational consultants, began a series of sessions with the intention to reflect critically upon their practice. Their approach is 'experiential': the intention is to make a close, moment by moment description of what it means to a young child to live and take part in the educational setting. During the following tens of sessions, the group discussed what they had learned from taking the perspective of the child and from seeking for possible ways to address the problems they meet. Gradually a new educational model for pre-school took shape: Experiential Education (EXE). Since that time Experiential Education has grown further to become an influential educational model in the area of elementary education in Flanders and the Netherlands. From 1991, its dissemination to other European countries, including the UK, began. The EXE-approach has further been developed for child care, special education, secondary education, teacher training and other contexts.

In search of quality

2. What constitutes 'quality' in care and education? One approach is to focus on the educational context and the teacher's actions: the infrastructure and equipment, the content of activities, teaching methods, adult style... Another is to make assessments of the outcomes and check if the desirable goals are met. Central to the project Experiential Education is the search for indicators for quality that are situated just in the middle of these two approaches. It points to the process.
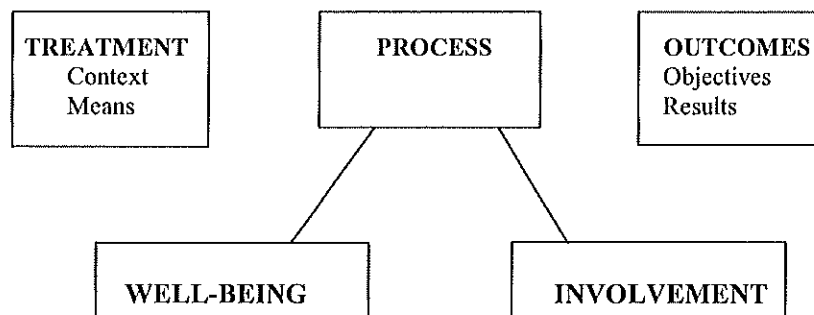
3. EXE-theory suggests that the most economic way to assess the quality of any educational setting (from the pre-school level to adult education) is to focus on two dimensions: the degree of 'emotional well-being' and the level of 'involvement' (Laevers, 1994). The first refers to the degree in which children feel at ease, act spontaneously, show vitality and self-confidence. All this indicates that their basic needs are satisfied: the physical needs, the need for tenderness and affection, the need for safety and clarity, the need for social recognition, the need to feel competent and the need for meaning in life and moral value. The second criterion – involvement - is linked to the developmental process and urges the adult to set up a challenging environment favouring concentrated, intrinsically motivated activity.

Involvement, a key word

4. Involvement, a key word in the EXE conception of curriculum, is not linked to specific types of behaviour or to specific levels of development. Both the baby in the cradle playing with his or her voice and the adult trying to formulate a definition, both the (mentally) handicapped child and the gifted student, can share that quality. Csikszentmihayli (1979) speaks of "the state of flow".

5. One of the predominant characteristics of this flow state is concentration. Involvement goes along with strong motivation, fascination and total implication. There is an openness to (relevant) stimuli and the perceptual and cognitive functioning has an intensity, lacking in activities of another kind. The meanings of words and ideas are felt more strongly and deeply. Involvement goes along with a strong feeling of satisfaction stemming from the exploratory drive, which makes the activity intrinsically motivating. Finally, involvement occurs in the small area in which the activity matches the capabilities of the person, that is in the 'zone of proximal development'. Because of all these characteristics, the 'flow'-state is seen as very favourable to - in fact an indispensable condition for - deep level learning.

6. Based on the concept of "deep-level learning", the "Leuven Involvement Scale" (LIS) has been developed, encompassing seven variants for different settings, ranging from babies to adult education. The LIS is a 5-point rating scale ranging from level 1 (no activity), through level 3 (child is engaged in an activity, but is functioning at a routine level) to level 5 (continuous, intense activity of the child, with purpose and pleasure). Despite the required observational skills, the inter-scorer reliability of the LIS-YC is .90. The scale is used internationally, for example in the Effective Early Learning project in the UK, where more than 5.000 adults learned to use it and more than 50.000 children at the pre-primary age have been observed with it (Pascal & Bertram, 1995; Pascal *et al.*, 1998).

Implications for the context

7. Capitalising on a myriad of experiences by teachers, a body of expertise has been gathered and systematised in The Ten Action Points, an inventory of ten types of initiatives that favour well-being and involvement (Laevers & Moons, 1997).

TEN ACTION POINTS FOR EXE TEACHERS

1. Rearrange the classroom in appealing corners or areas
2. Check the content of the corners and replace unattractive materials by more appealing ones
3. Introduce new and unconventional materials and activities
4. Observe children, discover their interests and find activities that meet these orientations
5. Support ongoing activities through stimulating impulses and enriching interventions
6. Widen the possibilities for free initiative and support them with sound rules and agreements
7. Explore the relation with each of the children and between children and try to improve it
8. Introduce activities that help children to explore the world of behaviour, feelings and values
9. Identify children with emotional problems and work out sustaining interventions
10. Identify children with developmental needs and work out interventions that engender involvement within the problem area.

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8. The action points cover a wide range of interventions. In the Action Points from 1 to 6, the organisation of the space and the provision of interesting materials and activities is at stake. In AP7 the field of social relations is addressed. The adult not only explores the relations between herself and the children and between the children, but she also takes initiatives to create a positive group climate. In AP8 activities are generated that support the exploration of feelings, thoughts and values. The Action Points 9 and 10 turn the focus on children with special needs.

An experiential teacher style

9. In EXE much attention is paid to the interactions between teacher and children. The 'Adult Style Observation Schedule' (ASOS) captures this aspect and is built around three dimensions: stimulation, sensitivity and giving autonomy (Laevers, Bogaerts & Moons, 1997). Stimulating interventions are open impulses that engender involvement, such as: suggesting activities to children that wander around, offering materials that fit in an ongoing activity, inviting children to communicate, confronting them with thought-provoking questions and giving them information that can capture their mind. Sensitivity is evidenced in responses that witness empathic understanding of the basic needs of the child, such as, the need for security, for affection, for attention, for affirmation, for clarity and for emotional support. Giving autonomy means: to respect children's sense for initiative by acknowledging their interests, giving them room for experimentation, letting them decide upon the way an activity is performed and when a product is finished, implicate them in the setting of rules and the solution of conflicts.

Systematic observation

10. Consistent with the EXE-framework, the Process-oriented Monitoring System (POMS) focuses in the first place on two major indicators of quality in the educational process: well-being and involvement. These give the answer to the crucial question: *how is each child doing*? Are the efforts we make sufficient to secure emotional health and real development in all important areas and for each of the children? At least three times a year, children are screened, with a five point scale for each of the dimensions. For children falling below level 4, teachers proceed with further observations and analyses (Laevers, 1997). As an extension of the POMS, the levels of development are assessed in 8 domains with a 5-point scale: gross and fine motor development, representation through language, representation through visual arts, understanding the physical world, social competence, mathematical and logical thinking, self-organisation. The paradigm behind this instrument is 'holistic' in this sense that the assessments are based on observation in real life situations.

From process to outcomes

11. In the EXE-theoretical framework, attention is paid to the effects or outcomes of education. The concept of 'deep level learning', expresses the concern for a critical approach to educational evaluation. Central to this is the questioning of superficial learning, learning that does not affect the basic competencies of the child and which has little transfer to real life situations.

12. The ongoing research programme in which instruments are developed to assess development through standardised situations, covers a wide array: (1) emotional health, (2) exploratory drive, (3) understanding of the physical world, (4) social competence, (5) communication and expression, (6) creativity, (7) musical perception, (8) self-organisation and entrepreneurship.

Values education

13. Within the EXE-project the concept of 'linkedness' - linkedness with (1) oneself, (2) the other(s), (3) the material world, (4) society and (5) the entire eco-system - offers a point of reference for the whole of value education. It is the expression of the concern for the development of a positive orientation towards the world as a whole. The sense of 'connectedness' can be seen as the cornerstone of prevention of criminal behaviour or any action that brings damage to things and people.

14. In sum, what Experiential Education strives for is the development of (future) adults who are self-confident and mentally healthy, curious and exploratory, expressive and communicative, imaginative and creative, well-organised and entrepreneurial, with developed intuitions about the social and physical world and with a feeling of belonging and connectedness to the universe and all its creatures.

2. The High/Scope® Curriculum – Active learning through key experiences

15. The High/Scope® curriculum was developed more than 40 years ago by David Weikart and his team in Ypsilanti, Michigan, with the purpose of helping children from disadvantaged areas to be successful in school and society. Unlike many other curricula, careful research has been part of the development of the program from the beginning, and a group of High/Scope children have been followed thoroughly during their childhood and adult life (Weikart, 1989; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1997). The longitudinal study shows that children from the High/Scope® program have adopted better to societal demands and found themselves a better life with higher education and employment than children in the control group. The following extract is how High/Scope® describes itself, with some additions provided by Dr. Weikart:

The High/Scope Curriculum

16. The High/Scope® educational approach for preschool, elementary, and adolescent programs is a set of guiding principles and practices that teachers and adults follow as they work with and care for children and youth. These principles are intended as an "open framework" that teams of adults are free to adapt to the special needs and conditions of their group, their setting, and their community. "Active learning" — the belief that children learn best through active experiences with people, materials, events and ideas, rather than through direct teaching or sequenced exercises — is a central tenet of the High/Scope® approach for all age levels. The active child creates her own knowledge within the frames of culture, biological maturity and the enriched human and material environment of the centre. According to Hohmann and Weikart (2002), the model is valid for groups of children from several different culture, as is shown by the successful adaptation of the program in many countries all over the world.

17. The High/Scope® preschool approach is used in both public and private half- and full-day preschools, nursery schools, Head Start programs, child care centers, home-based child care programs, intergenerational programs, and programs for children with special needs. Originally designed for low-income, "at-risk" children, the High/Scope® approach is now used for the full range of children and has been successfully implemented in both urban and rural settings both in the U.S. and around the world.

How do children learn in a High/Scope® "active learning" setting?

18. Since we believe that children learn best by pursuing their personal interests and goals, children in High/Scope® settings are encouraged to make choices about materials and activities throughout the day. As they pursue their choices and plans, children explore, ask and answer questions, solve problems, and interact with classmates and adults. In this kind of environment, children naturally engage in "key experiences"—activities that foster developmentally important skills and abilities. High/Scope® has identified 58 key experiences in child development for the preschool years and a wide range of practical strategies for promoting these key experiences. The key experiences are categorized into five groups:

Key experiences for young children – 5 groups
1. Creative Representation (to draw, paint, role play, pretend, make models).
2. Language and Literacy (to talk about personally meaningful experiences, describe, write, have fun with language.)
3. Initiative and Social Relations (to make plans, decisions, solve problems encountered in play, express feeling, be sensitive to others.)
4. Movement and Music (to feel and express steady beat, move in various ways and with objects, explore the singing voice, develop melody)
5. Logical Reasoning (to classify--explore and describe similarities, differences, and attributes of things; to seriate--comparing, arranging and fitting and ordering things by attributes; to develop number--comparing, one-to-one correspondence, counting; to be aware of space--changing shape, experiencing different play spaces, and interpreting spacial relations; to be aware of time--starting and stopping, time intervals, anticipating and describing sequences of events.)
These five categories of key-experiences represent objectives of learning as well as the act of learning. They form the content that teachers use to evaluate child progress on the High/Scope® Child Observation Record.

What does a High/Scope® preschool setting look like?

19. The space and materials in a High/Scope® setting are carefully selected and arranged to promote active learning. The centre is divided into "interest areas" organized around specific kinds of play. For example, a centre might include separate areas for block play, art activities, house play, small toys, computers, books and writing materials, and sand and water play. In each area materials are organized so children can get them out easily and put them away independently. High/Scope® does not recommend or endorse specific preschool equipment or materials, but instead provides general guidelines for selection.

How is the day organized in a High/Scope® preschool?

20. High/Scope® teachers give children a sense of control over the events of the day by planning a consistent routine that enables children to anticipate what happens next. A central element of the day is the "plan-do-review sequence," in which children state an intention and make a plan, carry it out during work time, and then reflect on what they have discovered and discuss it with the teacher and other children (review). The daily routine also includes times for small- and large-group experiences and time for outside play.

How do adults interact with children in a High/Scope® preschool?

21. High/Scope® teachers and caregivers are trained to participate as partners in children's activities rather than relate to children primarily as managers or supervisors. High/Scope® training emphasizes positive interaction strategies: sharing control with children, focusing on children's strengths, forming authentic relationships with children, supporting children's play ideas, and adopting a problem-solving approach to social conflict. The teacher's dialogue with the child avoids questions that the teacher knows the answer to. It is authentic dialogue, aimed to support the child in her learning and development as a person.

How is assessment handled?

22. High/Scope® teachers use the *Preschool Child Observation Record (COR), Second Edition* to evaluate children's developmental progress. As the basis for COR assessment teaching teams take daily anecdotal notes on children's developmentally significant behaviours during children's normal activities in the program. Teachers discuss these notes during daily team planning sessions. Team members use their anecdotal notes as the basis for completing the COR

assessment instrument at regular intervals. To evaluate early childhood programs, High/Scope®️ administrators use the *Preschool Program Quality Assessment (PQA)* instrument.

How does a High/Scope®️ preschool program teach math and reading skills?

23. High/Scope®️ preschool teachers do not teach math, reading, writing and other academic skills through sequenced activities, drills, workbooks, or other "school-like" activities. Instead, adults provide experiences and materials that help children develop the broad language and logical abilities that are the foundation for later academic learning. For example, to encourage children's beginning reading and writing skills, teachers create a print-rich environment and provide opportunities throughout the day for children to listen to stories, explore books and other print materials, and work with writing tools and materials. To promote math abilities they provide materials that enable children to use beginning skills in counting, comparing numbers, and one-to-one correspondence. Teachers use the High/Scope®️ key experiences in language and literacy and number to help them recognize and support the learning opportunities in these important pre-academic areas.

What about children with special needs?

24. The High/Scope®️ approach is used with special needs children in both self-contained and inclusive settings. High/Scope®️ teachers approach children with special needs by emphasizing the broad cognitive, social, and physical abilities that are important for all children rather than by focusing on the child's deficits. High/Scope®️ teachers identify where the special needs child is developmentally, and then provide a rich range of experiences that would be appropriate for a normally developing child at that level. For example, they would encourage a 4-year-old who is functioning at a 2-year-old's level to express his plans by pointing, gesturing, and saying single words and they would immerse the child in a conversational environment that provides many natural opportunities for using and hearing language.

Is High/Scope®️ used in infant and toddler programs?

25. Because of the urgent need for child care, preschool programs are expanding to include younger and younger children. The High/Scope®️ active learning approach has been successfully used in settings serving children from infancy through kindergarten age. Adults working with developmentally younger children use the High/Scope®️ infant and toddler key experiences as a guide to providing appropriate experiences and materials for the younger age group. High/Scope®️ Press has also published *"Tender Care and Early Learning: Supporting Infants and Toddlers in Child Care Settings"*, a comprehensive program manual written by Jacalyn Post and Mary Hohmann. There is also an infant-toddler assessment tool available.

How do High/Scope®️ teachers handle discipline?

26. High/Scope®️ teachers avoid using punishment and reward as tools for managing children's behaviour. When behaviour problems arise, they avoid isolating the child, instead encouraging the child to discuss the problem with the adult or with others involved. This problem-solving approach helps children develop social skills and become more aware of the impact of their actions on others. High/Scope®️'s approach to conflict resolution is described in *You Can't Come to My Birthday Party! Conflict Resolution With Young Children, Supporting Children in Resolving Conflicts* (video), and *It's Mine! Responding to Problems and Conflicts* (Infant-Toddler Series video).

Are art and music important parts of High/Scope®️ programs?

27. Art and music are part of every day's activities in High/Scope®️ programs. Art and music materials are available for children to use freely at work time in most High/Scope®️ classrooms. Many of the small-group experiences planned by High/Scope®️ teachers involve art materials; large-group experiences usually involve music. Adults use High/Scope®️'s key experiences in creative representation and music to highlight ways they can support the important abilities

children are developing in these areas. Again, High/Scope research has identified the theoretical principles and pedagogical approaches to be used in this area, and presents the developmental stages in early art-based learning. In "Supporting Young Artists: the Development of the Visual Arts in Young Children", the High/Scope authors, Epstein and Trimis (2003) show how to provide appropriate space and materials, to plan art-based experiences, and to use the language of art to engage with children in a supportive way.

Are computers a part of High/Scope® preschool classrooms?

28. Computers are a recommended, but not required, part of High/Scope® preschool programs. High/Scope® teachers select high-quality software that is appropriate for the preschool-age group, arrange computer equipment so that it is inviting and freely accessible to children, and look for ways to integrate the use of computers into the regular daily routine.

What does research show about the effectiveness of the preschool approach?

29. The effectiveness of the High/Scope® preschool approach has been documented in over three decades of research by the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation (for more information on these studies, please consult High/Scope® research – full web address provided in the bibliography) and several independent studies (see for example, Kwan and Sylva, 1996).

3. The Reggio Emilia Approach – Truly listening to young children

30. The following overview of the Reggio Emilia Approach is excerpted from *The Hundred Languages of Children* travelling exhibit, filled out by readings and notes taken from Dr Carlina Rinaldi's intervention at the Stockholm workshop.

31. Hailed as an exemplary model of early childhood education (Newsweek, 1991), the Reggio Emilia approach to early education is committed to the creation of conditions for learning that will enhance and facilitate children's construction of their powers of thinking "through the synthesis of all the expressive, communicative and cognitive languages" (Edwards, Gandini and Forman, 1993). Central to the whole approach is the conception of the child as a subject of rights and as a competent, active learner, continuously building and testing theories about herself and the world around her.

32. Rinaldi (2000) points out that each child creates her own meaning, but is truly supported to do so when peers and adults validate her competence. The development of a self-concept that is strong, outgoing and confident becomes part of this meaning making when the child is surrounded by warm reciprocal relationships. Education is seen as a building of thinking relationships between persons, and between ideas and the environment. The reciprocity of the interaction is important for the child's creation of identity and understanding of the surrounding world. Hence, the importance placed in Reggio Emilia on communication and on truly listening to young children.

Communal responsibility

33. The enduring nature of the Reggio Emilia schools can be explained partially by the inspired leadership of its late founder, Loris Malaguzzi, and the high level of quality sustained in the early childhood centres by their dedicated staff, many of whom are among the original programme developers. Underpinning the pedagogical excellence of the centres, however, is the commitment of the Reggio Emilia municipality to education. A motto of the city for many years has been "Investment in children is a fundamental cultural and social investment". As much as 40% of the municipal budget is allocated to education. The sustained commitment to parent and citizen participation reflects the philosophy behind the city's schools as "a system of relations between children, teachers, parents and the community where the school is located." The school community—municipality, teachers, pedagogistas, staff, parents and Advisory Council—regularly deliberate on their educational objectives for the schools, but the programme of each year is elaborated by children and teachers, based on the particular interests of children and on current concerns and opportunities.

The pedagogical dimensions[1]

34. Relations and communications, and concepts such as subjectivity and inter-subjectivity, are the very core of Reggio Emilia pedagogy. It is the child's expression, and through it her mediation of her knowledge and experience, that become the focus of interest. For this reason, teachers will first listen rather than talk. Rinaldi (2000) points out that the child's learning is individual, that is, each child creates her own meaning. In a continuous process, the child raises questions and constructs theories and meaning in an interplay with the surrounding world. The reciprocity of the interaction is important for the child's creation of identity and understanding of the surrounding world:

> *As children represent their mental images to others, they represent them to themselves, developing a more conscious vision (interior listening). Thus, moving from one language to another, from one field of experience to another, and reflecting on these shifts and those of others, children modify and enrich their theories and conceptual*

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1. For additional information, see Edwards *et al.* (1993).

maps. But this is true if, and only if, children have the opportunity to make these shifts in a group context—that is, in and with others—and if they have the possibility to listen and be listened to, to express their differences and be receptive to the differences of others.

35. With these goals in mind, distinct pedagogical features have emerged in the Reggio Emilia approach. These include an emphasis on expression and children's utilisation of multiple symbolic languages; the development of long-term projects as contexts for children's and teachers' learning and research; and careful attention to the role of the environment as it supports relationships among the three protagonists—teacher, parent, child.

The hundred languages of children

36. In the Reggio Emilia approach, young children are encouraged to explore their understandings of their experiences through different modes of expression considered natural to them, "the hundred languages of children": words, gestures, discussion, mime, movement, drawing, painting, constructions, sculpture, shadow play, mirror play, drama and music. High levels of expression are reached by Reggio Emilian children in many forms of symbolic representation, particularly the graphic arts, which in turn are documented by the pedagogical staff and the children themselves. Small groups of children work together—often with an adult—all around the educational setting, which has been organised so as to facilitate social, cognitive, verbal and symbolic constructions.

37. The approach also calls for the integration of the different languages as tools for cognitive, linguistic, and social development. Presentation of concepts and hypotheses in multiple forms of representation print, art, construction, drama, music, puppetry, and shadow play are viewed as essential to children's understanding of experience. The pedagogical teams in the Reggio Emilia schools normally employ *atelieristas*, highly trained in the visual arts, to work closely with the children and teachers. Particular – and sophisticated - techniques of expression are selected to sustain the interest and research of the children and support understanding. The shifting from one language to another, as well as reciprocal interaction, enable the children to create and consolidate concepts and conceptual maps.

A contextual curriculum

38. The premise of the RE concept of curriculum starts from the assumption that children have a stunning mastery of many facets of natural language, and an appreciation that "other minds" can share their different beliefs. While still in the first years of life, they develop powerful theories about the physical, biological and social worlds. These theories are enriched through dialogue with others, which in turn makes children aware that dialogue with others is necessary to build their own knowledge and identity. Through dialogue and communication, children acquire the awareness of their capacity to think, to have an opinion and to build "theories", that is, to think and interpret reality.

39. The RE curriculum, conceived as a path or journey, is a voyage of discovery that sustains these human competences as fundamental values for knowledge and for life. It is a curriculum that favours learning: learning to learn through experimentation with many different contents and forms; learning to communicate with others through the use of many "languages; and again "learning through reflection with others and self-reflection. Even though it works systematically with different contents, knowledge of content is of secondary importance since it is the construction of the child's identity, her values, her communication and learning competences that constitute the core of the pedagogy. Within the Reggio Emilia schools there are no planned goals or standards indicating what is to be learned as "these would push our schools towards teaching without learning" (Malaguzzi, in Edwards *et al.*, 1993). The children are encouraged, in collaboration with teachers and one another, to construct their own personalities and to determine the course of their own investigations and learning.

40. The Reggio Emilia curriculum can be defined therefore as "contextual", that is, it is determined by the dialogue among children, teachers and the environment surrounding them. Its content can arise from a proposal by one or more children, from a proposal by the teachers, from a natural event or from something found in the news. Topics for study are captured from the documented talk of children, through community or family events, as well as the known interests of children (puddles, shadow, dinosaurs, etc.). Team documentation and project work are essential components of the curriculum. Teachers work together to formulate hypotheses about the possible directions of a project, the materials needed, and possible parent and/or community support and involvement.

41. What has to be guaranteed is the fact that learning should be seen not just as individual activity that can be documented by a single test, but rather as a group activity. Children who grow up together at a Reggio Emilia school seek the opinions of their friends and stimulate their friends to express their own point of view. To consider the others as part of your own identity, to take into account the different, sometimes divergent, theories/opinions of others is seen as a resource. With their growing awareness of the value of these differences, children increase the amount and range of dialogue. They want to involve everybody and soon they learn how to do it by applying different strategies. Children who do not speak Italian yet and children with disabilities are comfortably and meaningfully integrated into activities.

42. The task of those who educate is not only to allow the differences to be expressed but to make it possible for them to be negotiated and nurtured through exchange and comparison of ideas. Here, there is question not only about differences between individuals but also differences between languages (verbal, graphic, plastic, musical, gestural, etc.), because it is the shifting from one language to another, as well as their reciprocal interaction, that enables the creation and consolidation of concepts and conceptual maps. The *"hundred languages"* become useful not only to make oneself understood but also to understand.

Educational projects

43. Projects, also emergent, are in-depth studies of concepts, ideas, and interests which arise within the group. Considered as an adventure, projects may last one week or could continue throughout the school year. Throughout a project, teachers help children make decisions about the direction of study, the ways in which the group will research the topic, the representational medium that will demonstrate and showcase the topic and the selection of materials needed to represent the work. From their experience and knowledge of children, the teaching staff will formulate what many describe as an "emergent curriculum" that follows the interests of children. Thus, Reggio Emilia *progettazione* are hypothesised projects characterised by a wide array of educational resources and objectives that are flexible and adapted to the particular needs and desires of each group of children. While it is often the children who lead and learn to propose, teachers assume the responsibility to sustain the cognitive and social dynamics of the group while they are in progress, and to provide at all moments suitable learning resources for the children. These resources include not only the space and materials for learning, but also the organisation of situations and occasions, including the participation of families. The teacher has the responsibility of establishing a genuine personal and pedagogical relationship with each child in addition to documenting the efforts of the project group.

Collaboration

44. Collaborative group work, both large and small, is considered valuable and necessary to advance cognitive development. Children are encouraged to dialogue, critique, compare, negotiate, hypothesize, and problem solve through group work. Within the Reggio Emilia approach multiple perspectives promote both a sense of group membership and the uniqueness of self.

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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga

Welcome to
Early Childhood Education
ECE Educate

Ministry of Education

Home » ECE Educate » Learning » Curriculum and learning » Te Whāriki » Glossary

Glossary of terms as used in this curriculum

Adult: any person beyond school leaving age who may be involved in an early childhood setting. This could include whānau, parents, extended family, staff members, supervisors, child care workers, teachers, kaiako, kaiawhina, specialists, and caregivers.

Āiga: (Samoan – used as a representative term) members of an extended family and its supporting network who form a context for the care and guidance of a child.

Assessment: the process of obtaining, and interpreting, information that describes a child's achievements and competence. The purpose of assessment is to provide pertinent information to contribute to improving learning opportunities for children.

Caregiver: an adult who cares for children, particularly in a home-based programme.

Cognition: knowing and thinking.

Contribution: playing a part in a common effort.

Culture: shared understandings and a shared worldview, often expressed in accepted lifestyles and traditions. Joan Metge, in her book, *Te kohao o te ngira: culture and learning* (Learning Media, Wellington, 1990) defines the term as "a system of symbols and meanings, in terms of which a particular group of people make sense of their worlds, communicate with each other, and plan and live their lives." Culture is not a synonym for ethnicity.

Curriculum: the sum total of the experiences, activities, and events, whether direct or indirect, which occur within an environment designed to foster learning and development.

Empowerment: giving power or authority that enables a person to take an action or role.

Enable: to supply a person with the means to carry out an action or fulfil a role.

Evaluation: the process of using assessment information and other data to review the quality and effectiveness of programmes, in order to make decisions about change.

Holistic: tending, as in nature, to form a unity made up of other "wholes", where the new unity is more than the sum of the parts, and in which each element affects, and is affected by, each other element.

Individual Development Plan or Individual Education Plan (IDP/IEP): a plan that forms the basis for programmes designed specifically for an individual child who, in order to benefit from their learning environment, requires resources alternative or additional to those usually available.

Māori immersion programmes: programmes, especially those in kōhanga reo, which aim to promote and nurture Māori language and culture.

Primary caregiving: a staffing arrangement, particularly suitable for infants and toddlers, in which one staff member has primary responsibility for a small group of children. The rationale for primary caregiving is that it facilitates the attachment of very young children to one adult.

Reciprocal: expressing mutual, complementary actions, in which each party returns a corresponding act or quality to the other.

Rituals: procedures that are followed consistently, especially when greeting, saying goodbye, and at mealtimes.

Settings: places where people can interact with each other, for example home, centre, play area.

Tagata Pasefika: the people of the Pacific Island nations. This term refers here to programmes for children in Pacific Islands early childhood centres.

Well-being: a state of physical, social, or emotional comfort, progress, and sound condition.

Whānau: members of an extended family and its supporting network who form a context for the care and guidance of a child.

Young child: a child between approximately 3 and 5 years of age. This term is used in preference to the more traditional term "preschooler", which implies that the curriculum for this age group takes its direction from school. "Young child" is used in this document to distinguish this developmental stage from infants and toddlers. Important characteristics of each stage are discussed in Part A.

Curriculum Principles Te Whariki

whakamana

Das Curriculum macht das Kind stark
im Lernen & beim Heranwachsen
(keine Defizitorientierung)

kotahitanga

Das Curriculum spiegelt die ganzheit-
liche Weise wieder, in der ein Kind
lernt & heranwächst

whanau tangata

Die weitere Welt von Familie & Gemein-
schaft ist ein wesentlicher Teil des C

nga hononga

Kinder lernen durch responsive &
wechselseitige Beziehungen mit Menschen,
Orten & Dingen

(J.J. Rousseau) Natur & Kultur gespiegelt

Ebenen: in Kitas, des Handelns

Recht

Organisation, Management

[Päd Strang] → Werte & Ethik des Zusammenlebens

Förderung

Lernen

- vom Kind aus - denken

[Päd Strang]: (Päd. Tools → Verknüpft mit eth. Fragen)
- Beobachtung & Dokumentation
- Laevers
- Eisberge von Te Whariki
- Projektarbeit von Reggio, Dewey, Katz
  (Unterschied zu Sit. & Sit.-orient. Ansatz)
- Unterschied: Deep-Level-Learning
  & Polarisation der Aufmerksamkeit
  bei Maria Montessori

- Umgang & Bedeutung von Übergängen

- Beherrschung der Kommunikation
  (Dolto)

"Partizipations-Paradigma"
Wertschätzung nicht mit Rhetorik zu
begreifen, bst. Form von Wissen
anderes Level als Bildungspläne

Teachers as Researchers

45. The teacher's role within the Reggio Emilia approach is complex. Working as co-teachers, the role of the teacher is first and foremost to be that of a learner alongside the children. The teacher is a teacher-researcher, a resource and guide as she/he lends expertise to children (Edwards *et al.,* 1993). Within such a teacher-researcher role, educators carefully listen, observe, and document children's work and the growth of community in their classroom and are to provoke, co-construct, and stimulate thinking, and children's collaboration with peers. Teachers are committed to reflection about their own teaching and learning.

Documentation

46. Documentation refers to the recording the children's project experience and work in progress through words, drawings, photos, videos, etc. It is viewed as an important tool in the learning process for children, teachers, and parents. Pictures of children engaged in experiences are continuously taken and displayed – and their words are recorded as they discuss what they are doing, feeling and thinking. The children's interpretation of experience through visual media are displayed as a graphic presentation of the dynamics of learning. The process as well as the final product of each project is recorded, incorporating the ideas of the children, their memories and feelings, with the teachers' observations of the dynamics of children's explorations and social engagements.

47. Documentation serves three key functions. 1) To provide children with a concrete and visible memory of what they have said and done, using images and words to serve as a jumping off point to explore previous understandings and to co-construct revisited understandings of the topics investigated. Children become even more interested, curious, and confident as they contemplate the meaning of what they have achieved; 2) To give the educators an insight into the children's learning processes (forming the basis of *progettazione*) their understanding and misunderstandings of everyday institutions, objects and events. In this sense, documentation becomes a tool for research, and a spur to continuous improvement and renewal; 3) To provide parents and the public with detailed information about what happens in the schools as a means of eliciting their reactions and support. In turn, children learn that their parents feel at home in the school, at ease with the teachers.

> *By means of documenting, the thinking—or the interpretation—of the documenter thus becomes material, that is, tangible and capable of being interpreted. The notes, the recordings, the slides and photographs represent fragments of a memory that seems thereby to become "objective." While each fragment is imbued with the subjectivity of the documenter, it is offered to the interpretive subjectivity of others in order to be known or reknown, created and recreated, also as a collective knowledge-building event. The result is knowledge that is bountiful and enriched by the contributions of many. In these fragments (images, words, signs, and drawings) there is the past, that which took place, but there is also the future (or rather what else can happen if...)... We are looking here at a new concept of didactics: participatory didactics, didactics as procedures and processes that can be communicated and shared. Visibility, legibility, and shareability become supporting nuclei because they are the basis of communicative effectiveness and didactic effectiveness. Didactics thus becomes more similar to the science of communication than to traditional pedagogical disciplines (Rinaldi, 2001)*

Environment

48. Within the Reggio Emilia schools, great attention is given to the look and feel of the classroom. Environment is considered the "third teacher." Teachers carefully organize space for small and large group projects and small intimate spaces for one, two or three children. Documentation of work, plants, and collections that children have made from former outings are displayed both at the children's and adult eye level. Common space available to all children in the school includes dramatic play areas and work tables for children from different classrooms to come together. The relationships between art, science, language and knowledge are everywhere evident in the Reggio Emilia environment.

4. *Te Whāriki* – A woven mat for all to stand on

> *The title of the curriculum, Te Whāriki, is a central metaphor. Firstly, the early childhood curriculum is envisaged as a Whāriki, a woven mat 'for all to stand on'... Secondly, the metaphor describes a 'spider web' model of curriculum for children, in contrast to a step model (ed. Penn, 2000).*

49. The following outline of *Te Whāriki* is based essentially on Professor Helen May's presentation at the Stockholm workshop, on the Carr/May chapter in Penn, ed. (2000), and on *Politics in the Playground* (May, 2001).

The story of ECEC in New Zealand and the elaboration of Te Whāriki

50. The story of early childhood education and care in late 20th century New Zealand is surprisingly intense and far more central to the national political debate than in most other OECD countries. The 1980s/90s were a time of profound political change, a time when classical market approaches were energetically applied to social and educational services. Public sector involvement was radically pared back and provider contestability gained legitimacy. According to Anne Meade speaking in 1988 (May, 2001), "Early childhood education was, and is again, an arena where ideological conflict is being worked out" with the National Government and Treasury seeing it as a field for parents and private enterprise, while Labour considering the sector as a target both for reform and greater government investment.

51. At the same time, great progress was being made. Thanks to a long tradition in New Zealand of parents establishing alternative preschools with themselves as providers, the rift between education and care that had occurred in other countries had been avoided. In 1986, childcare, kindergartens and play centres (parents' co-operatives) were brought together under one government agency, the Department of Education (becoming the Ministry of Education in 1989), which henceforth would be responsible for chartering, regulation, funding, training and curriculum matters. The subsequent *Before Five* policy document of 1988, which had retained the main outlines of the *Meade Report* (1988), established a common formula for funding, administration and regulation across all ECEC services. At the same time, the principle of diverse services, recommended in the *Meade Report*, was upheld.

52. Supporting positive government initiatives was a well-led and dynamic early childhood constituency, which work extremely hard to make its voice heard. In 1990, the two most powerful early childhood unions amalgamated to form a powerful joint union, the Combined Early Childhood Union of Aotearoa. The early childhood leadership was also progressive in its thinking, and promoted values of diversity, equity and bi-culturalism for early childhood services. It emphasised proper training and remuneration for early childhood staff, and from 1989, there was a general consensus that the 3-year Diploma of Teaching should be the benchmark qualification for licensing purposes. In addition, early childhood professionals and providers had been able to mainstream most children with special needs, and there was general recognition within the early childhood community of the rightful place of the Maori community in Aotearoa-New Zealand.

53. Against this background, and in the context of a curriculum reform that foresaw seamless education continuity from birth to tertiary education "leading to a competitive and efficient workplace" (ed. Penn, 2000), the government sent out a tender in 1990 for an early childhood curriculum. Concerned that a school-type curriculum (based on the acquisition of pre-defined skills and knowledge items) or a developmental psychology framework (based on physical, intellectual, emotional and social development) might fill the vacuum, Helen May and Margaret

Carr of the University of Waikato, with the Kohango Rea National Trust (for maori immersion early childhood programmes) submitted a highly original curriculum project.

54. When acceptance followed, they began their elaboration of the curriculum through broad consultation of all organisations and services. A curriculum development team with a broad representative base had already been established, in which parent groups and the main Maori early childhood organisation, the Kohango Rea National Trust, participated. These strands – family/parent/community links and Maori language and culture – would become main pillars of New Zealand's first national early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (1993, 1996).

55. The new curriculum was defined by the authors as a document for everybody involved in young children's development and learning: parents, caregivers, preschool teachers, managers, etc. Its title, *Te Whāriki*, means literally a 'woven mat', but should be understood primarily as a metaphor – a tapestry worked in common by many hands that is inclusive of multiple perspectives, cultures, and approaches. The elaboration of *Te Whāriki* reflects such an approach: in consultation with many stakeholders, the authors wove a broad framework of agreed principles and approaches rather than a traditional, content or activities curriculum. These principles, approaches and goals would be common to all early childhood services in New Zealand, but it was understood that these elements might be put into practice differently in different services.

Features of Te Whāriki

56. Rather than employing a one-world view of human development emptied of context, or articulating a curriculum with the subject-based learning areas and essential skills of the school, *Te Whāriki* chooses a socio-cultural approach to curriculum based on a desire to nurture learning dispositions, promote bi-culturalism and to reflect the realities of the young children in the services. It makes a strong political statement about young children: their uniqueness as learners, their ethnicity and their rights in New Zealand society. The whole is underpinned by a complex learning theory based on up-to-date research on young children's psychology and learning.[2] Where bi-culturalism is concerned, the Maori principle of "empowering children to learn and grow" was taken as the founding principle of the curriculum. The five major aims for children – Mana Atua/Well-being, Mana Whenua/Belonging, Mana Tangata/Contribution, Mana Reo/Communication and Mana Aoturoa/Exploration - were developed as equivalent domains of empowerment for children in both cultures.[3]

57. The four guiding principles of *Te Whāriki* are that the curriculum should reflect the holistic development of children; that the empowerment of the child should be a key factor; that family and community links should be strengthened; and that children learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships. The broad aims (or strands as they were later called) for children – which would help them to become competent learners in society - are: wellbeing, belonging, contribution, communication and exploration. Three to four broad goals are then proposed for each strand. Schematically, the curriculum may be summarised as follows:

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2. According to May (2001), psychology and learning theory in *Te Whāriki* are influenced especially by Piaget, Erikson, Brofenbrenner, Vygotsky and Bruner.

3. The words are not exact translations but mutually negotiated equivalent concepts that respect the history and cultural worldview of each group.

Guiding principles

Whakamana The curriculum will *empower* the child to learn and grow	**Kotahitanga** The curriculum will reflect the holistic way children learn and grow	**Whanau Tangata** The wider world of family, Whanau and community is an integral part of the curriculum	**Ngā Hononga** Young children learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships with people, places and things

Five aims (strands) for children

Mana Atua	Well-being
Mana Whenua	Belonging
Mana Tangata	Contribution
Mana Reo	Communication
Mana Aoturoa	Exploration

The five strands defined

1. Well-being	2. Belonging	3. Contribution	4. Communication	5. Exploration
The health and well-being of the child is protected and nurtured	Children and families feel they belong here	Opportunities for learning are equitable and each child's contribution is valued	The languages and symbols of children's cultures are promoted and protected	The child learns through active exploration of the environment

Development, cultural and learning goals for each strand

The health of children is promoted Their emotional well-being is nurtured	Connecting links with the family & the wider world are affirmed and extended	There are equitable opportunities for learning irrespective of gender, disability, age, ethnicity or background	They develop non-verbal communication skills for a range of purposes	Play is valued as meaningful learning, and spontaneous play is important
They're protected and safe from harm here	They know that they have a place here	They are affirmed as individuals	They develop verbal communication skills for a range of purposes	Confidence in the control of one's body is developed
	They feel comfortable with the routines, rituals and regular events	Opportunities to learn with and alongside others are encouraged	They experience the cultures' stories and symbols	They learn strategies for active exploration
	They know the limits and boundaries of acceptable behaviour		They discover different ways to be creative and expressive	They develop working theories for making sense of their living physical and material world

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58. The goals for each strand are further developed in *Te Whāriki*. Suggested and/or possible learning outcomes are suggested: for each goal. The goals, outcomes, attitudes and learning dispositions are generally quite broad, but there are examples also of quite specific goals, like "developing working theories about Planet Earth and beyond." The word "play" is not a frequently used word in *Te Whāriki*, although as seen above, spontaneous play and play valued as "meaningful learning" figure among the goals for learning and development.

59. Although the curriculum makes broad distinctions, in terms of needs and capacities, between infants (0-18 months), toddlers (18-36 months) and young children (2.5-5 years), *Te Whāriki* assumes that many programmes will be for mixed aged groups. In keeping with the spider-web image of the woven mat, child development is seen not in terms of maturational steps but rather as a spiral which takes into account developmental delays and spurts, diversity as well as universal stages. Te Whariki goals are achieved through a series of ever more complex visitations to familiar material rather than through children graduating from one grade to another.

Adult responsibilities in the delivery of Te Whāriki

60. Adult responsibilities in delivering *Te Whāriki* - whether in management, organization or practice - were spelled out in some detail in the 1992 draft of the curriculum, which the Ministry of Education widely trialled and evaluated. In the final version, this contextual elaboration was considerably reduced. The Ministry favoured "a more universalist approach" (ed. Penn, 2000), and retained guidelines on:

- The arrangements of the physical environment and equipment;
- The scheduling of activities and events;
- The organisational philosophies, policies, and procedures;
- The inclusion and support of parents and the connections with the community;
- The ages of the children, group size, and groupings (Ministry of Education, 1996).

61. In a later government document *Quality in Action* (Ministry of Education, 1998, p. 6), the Ministry stated that desirable objectives and practices in early childhood education in relation to curriculum are founded on two guiding principles:

- To work in partnership with parents/whānau to promote and extend the learning and development of each child who attends or receives the service;
- To develop and implement a curriculum that assists all children to be:
    - competent and confident learners and communicators;
    - healthy in mind, body, and spirit;
    - secure in their sense of belonging;
    - secure in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society.

It is hoped that these principles will be realised in ways that reflect the Treaty partnership of Maori and Pakeha (Europeans), and the Government's announced commitment to Māori education. *Te Whāriki* promotes an approach, in which children can meet similar values both at home and in preschool, while at the same time welcoming the bicultural aspects of New Zealand society.

Challenges

62. Although *Te Whāriki* met with wide approval from New Zealand early childhood organisations and the government, both with regard to objectives and the pedagogical approach, some challenging areas still remain. These challenges are discussed by the *Te Whāriki* authors

in Carr and May (Penn 2000) and May (2001). At least two of these challenges are found also in many other countries:

- The first challenge concerns *resources for early childhood*. It is generally recognised that the successful delivery of any curriculum depends on certain structural features such as funding, regulations, accountability and adequate training. For example, without properly trained staff, a curriculum will not be delivered properly, especially one so original and new as *Te Whāriki*. According to the authors, funding, regulatory and accountability measures are weak in the early childhood sector in New Zealand, which prevents adequate training and the recruitment of highly trained staff across the services.[4]

- A second challenge is *assessment*. Because of its emphasis on holistic goals rather than on "hard" knowledge-based areas and the acquisition of selected skills, the assessment of *Te Whāriki* is difficult (Carr, 2001), and its alignment with primary school curricula and expectations problematic. New frameworks for evaluation and assessment, appropriate to the principles and strands of *Te Whāriki* need to be worked out.[5] Equally, some reform of the contents and methods of early primary education may be necessary – as for example, in the Nordic countries – so as to ensure a smooth transition for young children, especially in systems that begin primary schooling at the age of 5 years. This would also relieve the "rushed child" syndrome and pressures on teachers to assess children in narrow terms, sometimes with streaming or remediation attached to the result. The authors comment:

Given a curriculum model that sees learning as the development of more complex and useful understanding, knowledge and skill attached to cultural and purposeful contexts, rather than a staircase of individually acquired skills, the assessment and evaluation of children and programmes becomes a complex matter. (Carr & May in Penn, 2000)

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4. In sum, resources to support the new curriculum are often lacking. This is a recurring challenge in educational financing. Funding per child in the early childhood sector is generally a third or less than the funding provided for students at the tertiary level, although young children in the age group need many more hours of attention daily, and require more favourable staff-child ratios than older groups.

5. Recent research in New Zealand (Carr, May and Podmore, 2000, pp. 7-8) – inspired by narratives and social cultural theories (see e.g. Bruner, 1996, 1990; Witherell & Noddings, 1991) – seems to favour "teaching stories" as an approach to evaluation of what goes on in early childhood education centres." Carr describes 'teaching story' assessment in terms of the four Ds: describing, documenting, discussing and deciding.

5. The Swedish curriculum – Goals for a modern pre-school system

History and auspices

63. This overview of the Swedish curriculum for the Pre-school (Swedish Ministry of Education and Science, 1998a) is provided by Professor Ingrid Pramling of Gothenburg University, Sweden.

64. Public pre-school in Sweden has had a long tradition of regulation and professionalisation. As early as the 1960s, the government had established committees to examine content and working methods in the pre-school class for 6 year olds. Professionals working in day-care and the pre-school class were expected to have similar training and work on similar content for children of all ages. The educational function of both daycare and the pre-school were recognised, as well as the key notions of interaction, communication and dialogue.

65. In 1996, the Ministry of Education and Science took over responsibility for daycare from the Ministry of Social and Family Affairs. Day-care and the pre-school class, now known as "pre-school", have become the foundation stage of the school system and of lifelong learning. School law is now under review in order to place both pre-school and school under the same legal conditions and status. Pre-school integrating early education and care is considered to be the first step in the child's life long learning, a perspective which is obvious in the first national curriculum for 1 to 5 year old children – (Swedish Ministry of Education and Science, 1998a).

66. An interesting development is that as the perspective of learning and knowledge formation has been refined by the Ministry, and as the values and content of the national curriculum have become more clearly formulated, pre-school – during the same period - has gradually become decentralised and deregulated. Decentralisation and deregulation are strong in all fields in Swedish society, and not least in the school system. Decisions are meant to be taken at municipal level, and within the municipal system, at the level of pre-school centres, and in classrooms, by children and their teachers. The curriculum is based on a division of responsibility where the state determines the overall goals and guidelines for the pre-school and where the municipalities – and staff working in the centres – take responsibility for implementation.

67. Though clearly formulating learning goals, the Swedish curriculum is more a regulation than a detailed curricular guideline as found in other countries. How municipalities and centres achieve the goals of the national curriculum is their responsibility, but the content and range of these goals are now clearly set out. Pre-school centres are encouraged to work on all the different aspects of child development and learning, as well as focusing on values and norms. Earlier it was possible for the staff to retain the idea that mathematics or writing was something children should learn later in school, or to say that that children's social competence is the most important issue to work on with young children. This is no longer possible. The focus is now equally on children's learning, as well as on emotional and social development. Pedagogues have to work on *all* aspects of the child's development, including the stimulation of the child's interest in written language and mathematics, but "in meaningful contexts and situations" (Swedish Ministry of Education and Science, 1998a).

A theory of learning

68. A fundamental notion in the new approach of the Swedish pre-school is that the child's learning is grounded in play and meaning making. Knowledge is not to be found in the child or in the world (including adults) but in the relationship between them (Marton and Booth, 1997). For this reason, according to the Swedish curriculum, the child's search for knowledge should be developed through "play, social interaction, exploration and creativity, as well as through observation, discussion and reflection" (Swedish Ministry of Education and Science, 1998a). The child's learning is dependent on interaction with people, objects and situations in the

surrounding world. Language, learning and identity are closely intertwined. In children's communication and play, meaning is created – a perspective outlined in recent views of learning, teaching and schooling.

69. Since the very core of learning is the creation of meaning, and no one other than the child herself can create this understanding, learning on all levels has to be individually formulated (Carlgren, 1994). The way the child forms his or her knowledge is dependent on the child as a whole in a context, that is, the child's psychological, social and biological aspects are integrated in the way she experiences something (Pramling, 1994). Learning and knowledge formation lead to understanding, seeing, conceptualizing specific aspects of the world around us. Different kinds of knowledge, - facts, skills, social knowledge and tacit understandings - are all aspects that are integrated in knowledge formation. The Swedish curriculum adds: "Learning should be based not only on interaction between adults and children, but also on what children learn from each other" (Swedish Ministry of Education and Science, 1998a).

70. Does the new focus on learning mean that the Swedish pre-school is moving away from the play-based, kindergarten tradition? Is there a risk that staff will begin to act as if pre-school were a formal traditional school in which children were taught content whether or not they desired it? Some examples of such an approach were found in the evaluation made by the National Agency for Education (Skolverket, 2001), but they are relatively rare. Both parents and the authorities trust that the pre-school teachers – who are highly educated by international standards - have the willingness and capacity to achieve the vision of the new curriculum without losing the heart of the pre-school tradition. However, some doubts exist at the moment as current evaluations shows varying quality in the Swedish pre-schools (Sheridan, 2001), and also a slight decrease in pre-school teacher recruitment. Without highly educated teachers, problems may arise in making sense of the 16 page curriculum and in applying its objectives in praxis.

71. To make the curriculum come alive for all children in all pre-school, ongoing teacher training will be necessary, in particular, to learn about the child's perspective, and about how the child makes sense of the surrounding world (Doverborg & Pramling, 1999; Pramling Samuelsson & Lindahl, 1998). Teachers will need also to study the project for Swedish society formulated in the curriculum and other official texts. This implies creating their own understanding and being able to translate the goals of the curriculum into meaningful activities for each individual child in his or her group. Finally, teachers have to learn about themselves, that is, to become aware of their own taken for granted understanding, values and beliefs, and how these are influencing their everyday contact with the children (Mårdsjö, manuscript).

Goals proposed by the Swedish Curriculum

72. The Swedish curriculum outlines five groups of goals that each centre should aim to achieve: 1) Norms and values, 2) Development and learning, 3) Influence of the child 4) Pre-school and home, and 5) Co-operation between the pre-school class, the school and the leisure-time centre. These goals are defined in more detail in the curriculum (For a thorough description of the goals, see Swedish Ministry of Education and Science, 1998a, pp. 11-15). In relation to every block of goals there are also directives for the pre-school staff about what their specific responsibilities are. To strive towards a goal means to find out in what way is possible for the child to develop, or how she or he has developed during his or her time in pre-school. In order to make sure that each child can reach these goals, pre-schools must have an "individual developmental plan" for each child (Månsson & Vallberg-Roth, 2003).

Norms and values

73. According to the Swedish curriculum (Swedish Ministry of Education and Science, 1998a), an important task of the pre-school is to develop values.

An important task of the pre-school is to establish and help children acquire the values on which our society is based. The inviolability of human life, individual freedom and integrity, the equal value of all people, equality between the genders as well as solidarity with the weak and vulnerable are all values that the school shall actively promote in its work with children (Swedish Ministry of Education and Science, 1998a).

74. Values are conceived as being both societal and personal. The pre-school shall actively and consciously influence and stimulate children to develop an understanding of common democratic values in Swedish society, so that they can share and live these in the future, e.g. the ability to discover, reflect on and work out personal positions on different ethical dilemmas and fundamental questions of life in daily reality, and learn to respect all forms of life as well as care for the surrounding environment. Democracy and related notions should be both a content and a method in the pre-school. In this sense, democracy becomes both an object of learning as well as informing the act of learning. This implies that children have to think about democracy as well as to experience democracy in the pre-school centre.

75. At a more personal level, care of and respect for other people, justice and equality should inform all activities in the pre-school. Children should be encouraged to develop sensitivity and ethical values in their everyday experiences. These goals have to be adapted, however, to every single child since children in pre-school have different capabilities and possibilities, not least, children with special needs since they too are included by right in the Swedish pre-school. Likewise, the adults should model for children a way of relating to the children and the surrounding world that will positively influence children's understanding and respect for democratic values in a society.

Development and learning

76. "The Swedish pre-school should be characterised by a pedagogical approach where care, nurturing and learning together form a coherent whole."(Swedish Ministry of Education and Science, 1998a). Care and education form a unity in the Swedish pre-school, as education is built on caring interaction with other children and adults. The activities proposed or chosen stimulate play, creativity and joyful learning, and use the interest of children in learning and mastering new experiences, knowledge and skills. Pre-schools seek to ensure that children:

- Develop their identity and feel secure in this,
- Develop their ability to listen, narrate, reflect and express their own views,
- Develop their vocabulary and concepts, the ability to play with words, an interest in the written language and an understanding of symbols as well as their communicative functions.

77. Related to the formulation of learning goals are "every-day-life-skills". These correspond to qualities such as cooperative skills, responsibility, initiative, flexibility, reflectivity, active attitudes, communicative skills, problem solving skills, critical stance, creativity, as well as an ability to learn to learn. Such qualities are seen as general and part of all school subjects. There are also more specific learning goals focusing on children making sense of the world around them, aspects relating to culture, natural science, reading, writing and mathematics.

Influence of the child

78. In order to develop a base for an understanding of democracy, children must be deeply involved in their own social world. Children's social development presupposes that they, according to age and capabilities, are given growing responsibility for their own actions and for the environment in pre-school. The needs and interests which the children themselves express in different ways provide the foundation for shaping the environment and planning pedagogical activities. For this reason, pre-school should ensure that children:

- Develop the ability to express their own thoughts and views and thus have the opportunity of influencing their own situation,
- Develop the ability to understand and act in accordance with democratic principles by participating in different kinds of cooperation and decision-making.

Other features of pedagogy contained in Lpfö

79. After the curriculum has set out the different requirements in each of the five groups of goals, it provides some guidelines for staff as to how they should act in response to the goals. Little is said, however, about the methods or the ways of working with children to make these goals come true. This is part of the decentralization process, and a clear step away from the earlier guidelines in pre-school (Socialstyrelsen, 1987). Educators are trusted to have the appropriate methods gained from their initial and on-going professional education. It is also taken for granted that there are many ways to work towards the goals. At the crossroads between the child's desires and the intended goals of the curriculum, the teacher is expected to know how to create favourable conditions for children's learning. Teachers become curriculum makers, and children are part of that construction (Alvestad, 2001).

80. Among the main assumptions found in the curriculum about children's learning are:
- First, the child experiences every single situation, question, task etc. in her own specific, individual way.
- Second, the child always has an intention, especially in play, when she chooses and sets the goals herself. The challenge for the teacher is to create learning situations in which children have their own intentions, for if they do not, they will become overly dependent on their teachers and on ready-made knowledge. In the Swedish curriculum for pre-school, teaching does not mean providing pieces of knowledge to children, but supporting them to engage in conscious, independent action toward a goal. All activities during the day are intended to develop children's skills and understanding, but not through the kind of structured lesson plans that used to characterise the school.
- Thirdly, the child changes his or her perspective - that is, create new meaning and understanding of something - in communication with people and the world. Education is built on communication, and especially on dialogue between the child and the adult, through which children can act, think and reflect.
- Fourthly, diversity is an opportunity. Exposure to diversity helps children realize that there are other ways of thinking or doing things that can be more humane or intelligent. In contexts that welcome diversity, there is a chance that each individual's own understanding will be taken into consideration. In addition, through diversity, variation becomes visible and expected, and becomes an opportunity to stimulate children's thinking.
- Finally, pre-school is considered as one phase in the child's life long journey of learning, as developing skills and creating understandings of different aspects of the surrounding world is a lifelong process (SOU, 1996:27).

Research on the curriculum

81. Little evaluation or research has taken place as yet on the implementation of the new curriculum. Peter Haug (2003) has analyzed projects financed by the National Board of Education, theses and community documents from 1998 up to the present day. He claims that to date, there has been little reflection on how the curriculum goals have influenced either pedagogical praxis or the outcomes of children's learning. In parallel, Broström's (2003) has criticised the Swedish Curriculum for being too lose and vague, and suggests to teachers that they can decide by themselves what content to work on. Again, a recent survey of Swedish teachers suggests that the influence of pre-curriculum thinking is still strong. When asked about what they want children to have in their backpacks when they leave pre-school, many teachers

answered that children need to feel secure and socially confident when they leave pre-school, but failed to mention other major goals emphasised in the new curriculum? The question why teachers fall back into a psychological perspective of the child, despite their awareness of pre-school as the first step in the school system is debated by Pramling Samuelsson & Sheridan (2004). Yet, it is also true that teachers are learning to talk about pre-school in the ways stated in the curriculum, even if they easily fall back to a more traditional way of talking about young children and their education.

CHAPTER 2

KEY ISSUES IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

82. The draft of this chapter was prepared by Professor Ingrid Pramling, in association with Ph.D. Sonja Sheridan and Ph.D. Pia Williams from Göteborg University. It treats of five important issues in developing curricula and a high quality, preschool pedagogy, viz. the individual child and societal goals; what do children in the next generation need to learn; what types of thinking and learning work best for young children; staff competence and quality issues.

A direction for children's learning based on values and norms

83. Over the past decade, a global trend towards formulating frameworks/curricula based on societal goals has emerged, yet embracing a philosophy that focuses on the individual child as a subject. This focus on the child is in accordance with human rights principles that privilege the uniqueness of each person and with socio-cultural theories that see children as attached to specific contexts and cultures. On the other hand a national curriculum must have something common as a goal for all children. Thus, countries tend to formulate overall curriculum goals that provide a direction for children's learning, based on agreed values and norms.

84. Respecting the individual child as a subject while affirming the existence of general common goals creates tensions. Teachers are aware that many of the better curricula are based on the principle that children should decide and develop freely their projects with their teachers. In many instances, this has led them to believe that content cannot be predicted or formulated in advance in a curriculum text.

85. However, curricula exist to provide a structure and educational direction to teachers in their work of supporting the development of capacities and skills, while respecting the child's natural interests and choices (Sylva *et al.* 1999). The dilemma of the child's interests and teaching goals is resolved in the Swedish curriculum as follows. Key values, skills and understandings are formulated by the state for all children from the early years right through the school system. An example in the Swedish context is the importance of living together *democratically*. For each of these areas, a few general goals are decided at national level, after intensive discussion with the main stakeholders. These goals are then lived out in practice and worked upon in the collective arena – using *as a content* children's individual and age-specific ways of thinking and expressing themselves (Pramling Samuelsson & Asplund Carlsson, 2003). The goals are interpreted and adopted to each child in accordance with his or her experiences. In this way, both the interests of the individual child and societal goals are achieved.

The largest freedom possible within the overall goals

86. Developing a curriculum for young children means therefore to position oneself at the crossroads between societal goals and the choices of each child. This raises the question of what freedom there is at the centre level, the teacher level and the child level. Our commitment is that *all curricula should give centres, teachers and children the largest possible freedom*, but still retain the direction of overall common goals. A crucial competence for teachers is the ability to

simultaneously meet each child and his or her experiences, while directing the child towards the objectives of learning. The quality of ECEC, as we know, depends on the staff's skills, attitudes and willingness to carefully guide and challenge the child's experience and meaning-making. But children must be given the largest possible freedom to grow and learn.

Children benefit most from a combination of associative and logico-analytic thinking

87. A point of controversy in ECEC curriculum making has been the opposition proposed between associative (narrative) thinking and logical analytical thinking. Although both aspects constantly exist in the everyday life with children, one or other will often become more visible in different programs. In High/Scope, for example, logical analytical thinking is central, while free associative thinking is more in evidence in Te Whariki and Reggio Emilia. The Swedish curriculum, following Bruner (1996), takes the position that children benefit most from curricula and activities that stimulate both narrative and logico-analytic ways of thinking. In order to become skilful learners in creative subjects and natural sciences, the child needs both ways of thinking (Pramling Samuelsson & Sheridan, 2004). Teachers and pedagogues should encourage both types of thinking in the different topics and tasks that children undertake.

The same learning goals at all levels of education but at different levels of complexity

88. Should young children be given specific content to learn? In general, the answer is no! Children should learn the same in preschool as later in compulsory school, that is, values and norms, skills and an understanding, according to age, concerning different aspects of the world around them. This does not mean that the three year olds should start with the alphabet, but rather, s/he should slowly be guided into the meaning of symbolic communication (Gustafsson & Mellgren, 2000). It does not mean that the four year olds have to start counting, but to begin to experience numbers and to see the world around them in relational, mathematical terms (Doverborg & Pramling Samuelsson, 1999). Or that five-year olds should vote, but be introduced to collective living based on democratic principles. The objectives of learning can be the same on all educational levels – but at different levels of complexity.

A continuity of perspectives through ECEC and the school

89. A main focus in the field of ECEC is respect for the interests of the child. The child's desire is the base for learning. A crucial point is: how can an interest be raised or developed in children. The child's interest will often come from family and social contest, but most often from the here and now. The ECEC centre must take the responsibility of arousing children's interest in the tasks or contents it wants them to learn about. The teacher's task must be to direct children's awareness towards the objectives or issues that she wants children to know and understand. The way to do so must of course be built on a respect for each child and his or her way of creating understanding. This perspective ought to be shared also by the compulsory school. Where respect for the children and their interests are concerned, there ought to be continuity in perspective throughout ECEC and formal schooling.

Children's learning must be focussed on creating meaning

90. The question about guiding the interests of children is linked to another dilemma in early education and care. Many ECEC professionals fear that if their centre becomes goal oriented, it will become a school! Their fear comes perhaps from the grown-up's experiences of their own school – something they do not want young children to undergo! And certainly, there are good reason for avoiding a repetition of the rote-learning and inactivity of traditional schooling! Young children's learning and growth ought to be focused on creating meaning, that is, on developing an understanding of different aspects of the world around them. For example, developing the *hundred languages* as a way to communicate is different from learning to name all the letters in the alphabet. Developing an understanding of numbers is different from learning counting procedures. If the traditional school focused on facts and formulated knowledge, the early childhood approach is to allow children to act on the world in activities of

all kinds, which in turn change the child's way of experiencing the world and her own capacities. Knowledge formation means that one's way of experiencing the surrounding world or of relating oneself to different situations or tasks has changed. The early childhood curriculum ought to be learning oriented in a way that challenges and stimulates children's interest and understanding.

Curricula must also look to the future

91. People everywhere are embedded in cultural, taken-for-granted thinking, which is both a strength and a weakness. We tend to think that children should be brought up the same way as we adults were, although we all are aware that society has changed tremendously. If we want our children to be educated for an unknown future we have to be innovative and try out alternative approaches in ECEC. Since we are embedded in our culture, yet living in a globalised world, international collaboration and exchange is of great importance for developing curriculum for young children, even if one curriculum never can be copied from somewhere else, but must be developed in the historical and cultural context of each country. In this political work, each country must take a position about values and goals for the next generation, and by that relate their culture to other cultures. The curriculum ought not only to be here and now oriented, but also have a clear perspective on the future.

A quality programme can be based both on culture and learning research.

92. Why are all the five programmes presented here successful? Whether their ideas have been based on psychological research or on socio-cultural understandings, we can affirm that the people promoting these curricula have been interested, engaged and devoted to giving children a good start in life. They all express a willingness to support children in their learning process, and whether the focus is on cognitive or emotional competences, both aspects are substantial in their work with children. All programs also throw light on ECEC as something different from traditional academic schooling – which makes them more valuable in giving children a creative start in life. Yet, they differ from each in many important aspects – which suggests that a quality programme can be based both on culture and arly childhood psychological research.

The quality of staff is paramount

93. The quality of the programme and the competence of the staff are two closely linked dimensions. As we have seen in the curricula presented, they all have well educated staff, whether through recruitment level, initial training or extended in-service training. In Sweden, for example, a large proportion of ECEC staff have university degrees in early childhood development and pedagogy. Staff meeting children everyday must have high standards of training, since it is the daily interactions between the adult and the child that make the difference in children's well-being and learning (Johansson, 2003). There should not be any difference in level of competence between teachers working in ECEC or compulsory school. Staff working with young children need special training, and the teachers leading, developing and assuring the quality of ECEC ought to have a university degree.

ECEC curricula should deal with play and learning and the relationship between them

94. In documents and curricula about ECEC, little is said about play, although researchers sometimes claim that play is what distinguish ECEC from formal schooling. Play is often referred to in a non reflective and taken for granted way – as something allowed to children outside the curriculum. This is surprising as play, as a field of research, has developed greatly since Froebel, 150 years ago, established play as a main feature of preschool education (Fröbel, 1995). If ECEC should have a curriculum with goals, and play is a central to the child's development, then the challenge is raised to question and problematise what play means in the context of young children's learning. Is play an activity by itself, or is it a means to learning? In what way is it different from learning? These are questions that should be raised in curriculum

work. Every curriculum for ECEC ought to deal with play and learning and the relation between them.

ECEC programmes must be open and make room for children's initiatives and experiences

The curricula presented here are all open curricula and provide space for individual initiatives from both teachers and children. In this openness there is room for exploring, trying things out, for raising open questions to which there are no fixed and final answers. This is one of the criteria of quality coming from research on the English EPPE-project. Rather than direct teaching, open questions from the teacher gives the child better opportunities to think and reflect, and by that to develop his or her understanding (Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden & Bell, 2002). In an ECEC program, there must always be room for children's questions, exploring, creativity, fantasy and challenging. An open curriculum also gives room for different learning styles and strategies. In this way each and every child can find a learning space and appropriate activities within a programme. No one will be excluded, which may be the most important aspect of ECEC and schooling for young children.

...and yet be inscribed in a life-long learning context with common learning objectives and approaches

95. The discussion about openness leads to the question of formulating learning objectives in ECEC. The values of society must be visible in the curriculum, but also other learning objectives that society believes the next generation should know or be skilled in. If we really believe that life-long learning is something to strive for, there must be continuity throughout the school system regarding both objectives and learning means. In practice, this means that curricula for young people from 1 to 19 years (depending on at what age secondary school ends) will have both common learning objectives and common learning approaches and methods (pedagogy). The content of learning and pedagogical approaches in ECEC ought to be seen in a life-long perspective. Professionals involved in education must be able to see clearly what are the intentions of early childhood educators, so that they in turn can become involved and consider ECEC as the foundation stage of the life-long learning process.

Strong evaluative processes built in

96. Another reason for making explicit the link with life-long learning is to improve accountability in the early childhood field. For this, evaluations and assessments of programs need to be developed, a process ECEC is just beginning. The level and range of creativity that ECEC professionals bring to this task – along with others working in this field - will be decisive for the future of ECEC. It is extremely important to find new ways of evaluating ECEC since traditional school evaluations, established to measure the knowledge or level of thinking in students, are not suitable. Instruments should be used which measure above all curriculum appropriateness and teachers competences - since the child's learning is due to experiences (guided by the curriculum), leading to communication and interaction with others and the surrounding world. When only small details are evaluated, a literacy/numeracy syllabus for instance, teachers tend to start training to teach these details, and the whole idea of fostering young children's thinking, reflection and creativity becomes lost! Curricula should be evaluated and validated, especially the effect of their program on children's long-term learning and development.

Quality and its measurement

97. There is much reference to quality in ECEC discourse and research, but often without giving the word any precise definition or meaning. Unless meaning is defined, it will not be possible to evaluate or develop quality. If there are many different meanings, quality needs to be defined from these different perspectives and related to goals or criteria, which are neither too open, nor too detailed. But, in fact, little is known in general about children's outcomes from being involved in ECEC. It may be time to undertake larger longitudinal research studies about

the impact of ECEC, in which centre-level factors, teacher-level factors, child factors (home, socio-economic background...), and children's own perspective should be researched. The views of children – as participants with their own rights - should also be sought in order to trace how childhood is experienced by the children themselves and the consequences of this experience on later learning in school.

Democracy and gender questions

98. Looking at curriculum questions in the third millennium, there are two aspects that still need special focus: democracy and gender questions where much progress could still be made. Democracy needs to be embedded in the curriculum, both as an object of learning and as an act of praxis. Gender questions can be also be viewed as an aspect of democracy, but have also to be handled specifically, since we know today that to give boys and girls equal rights in the early years means to give them different and specific opportunities. It is not sufficient to say that everything in the centre is open to all children, since at this age children choose gender specific activities (Svaleryd, 2003). The issues needs to be problematised and strategies to deal with them found.

Both care and education should be reflected in the curriculum

99. To develop curricula in which care and education are combined requires a change in theoretical perspectives. There is an old tradition of connecting the institutional experience of infants and toddlers with care and that of children aged three years and older with learning. This is reflected in the practice of assigning the less educated personnel to the younger children (Johansson, 2003) and in the general neglect of the quality of the childcare sector, which generally makes do with limited access and poorly paid staff (OECD, 2001). Care seems to be viewed as something "natural" where little or no staff education is required. However, researchers take a different view in pointing out that the first three years of life are crucial in terms of brain development. In addition, in a good learning environment, care is always an aspect, and vice versa. To integrate care and education in praxis is a professional skill that requires both initial and ongoing training.

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