

the next six years: the first six years

The National Children's Strategy and children's early years

Tuesday 13th December, Gresham Hotel, Dublin 1



Policy Challenges for deepening Quality

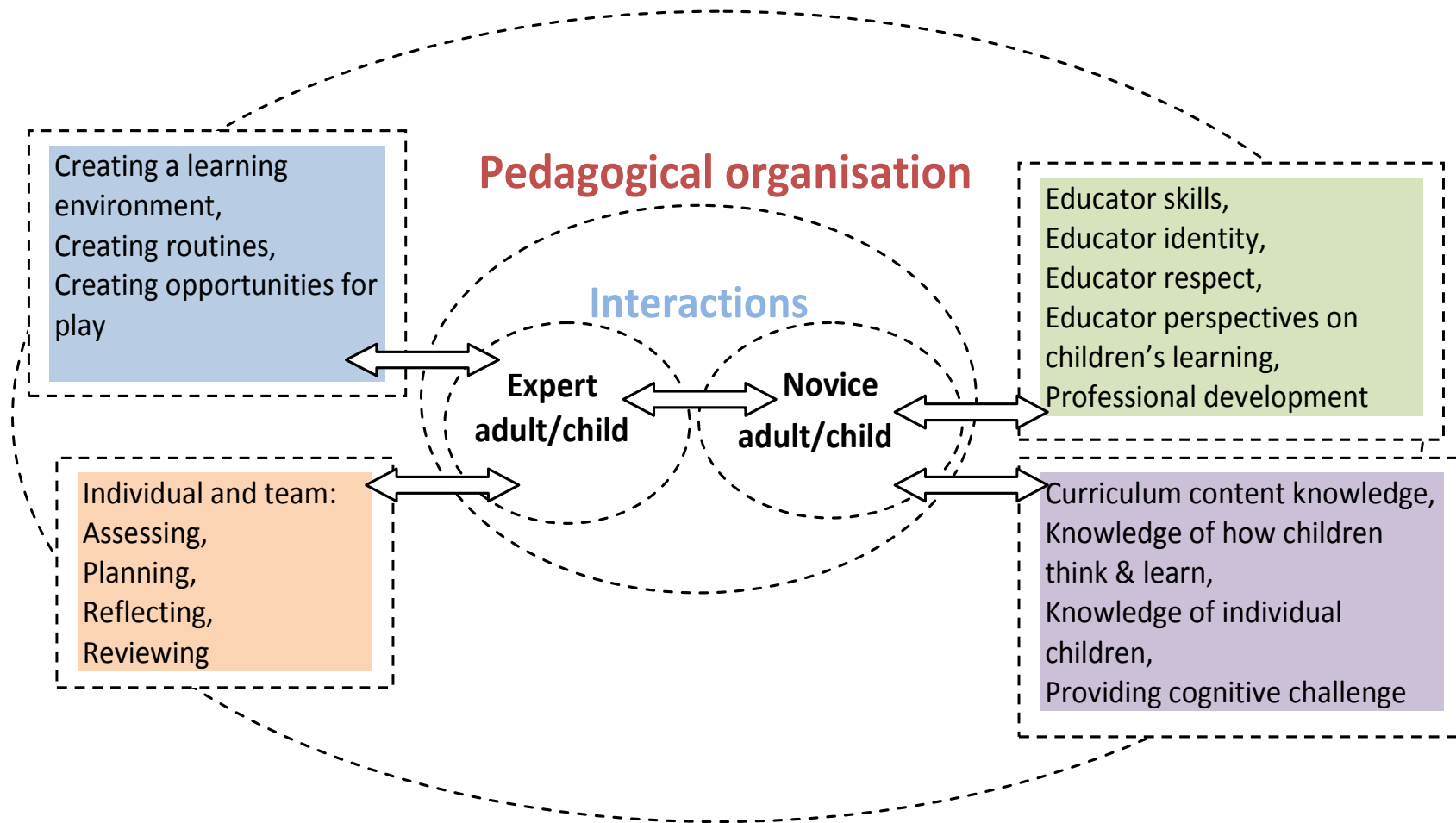
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Presentation outline

- What is quality ECEC?
- Why is it important?
- What do we want to achieve?
- Relevant policy in relation to ECEC
- The policy challenge to deepening quality
 - key conclusions and a question

Policy environment

Curriculum



Parental participation/Community relations

Social values/early education

Figure 1 Model of Quality Practice in ECEC (French, 2011)

Why is quality ECEC essential?

- 1.Children's rights**
- 2.Research**
- 3.Workforce**
- 4.Neuroscience**
- 5.Cost benefit analysis**



What do we want to achieve?

- Children to have positive dispositions for learning (wonderment, excitement, curiosity, concentration, perseverance and full engagement in experiences)
- Children to be flexible - with the desire to want to continue learning
- Children to have imagination and creativity
- Children to think for themselves
- Children to be independent and able to solve problems
- Children to make the right choices, take the initiative and lead
- Children to be literate, numerate, emotionally stable, socially skilled
- Children enabled to participate as full citizens in society

National Children's Strategy

National Goal: Children will receive quality supports and services...

- Providing a strong community-based response
- Integrated and easily-accessed services
- Renewed emphasis on prevention and early intervention

Group 1 (basic range of needs), Objective A
Children's early education and developmental needs will be met through quality childcare services and family-friendly employment

ECEC policy in relation to quality

1. Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework
2. Síolta, the National Framework for Quality
3. The universal right for children of three and four years of age to a Free Pre-School Year
4. The Literacy and Numeracy Strategy
5. Regulation 5 and revised inspection systems

Free Pre-School Year

*Any settings ...who wish to participate in the Free Pre-School Year must agree to provide an **appropriate educational programme for children ... which adheres to the principles of Síolta. Services will be supported in meeting this requirement through the assistance of Síolta Co-ordinators and by their local City and County Childcare Committee** (OMCYA, 2009, p. 2).*

Regulation 5

- *A person carrying on a pre-school service shall ensure that each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the service through the **provision of the appropriate opportunities, experiences, activities, interaction, materials and equipment**, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child and the child's cultural context (DHC, 2006, Part II, Regulation 5).*

The Child, Health, Welfare & Development Assessment Guide (Health Services Executive, 2011)

Section 3 Physical and material environment

The physical and material environment supports children development which is evident in the indoor or outdoor environments which provides a wide range of developmentally appropriate experiences for the children incorporating a cultural context.

- (b) The indoor environment provides a range of developmentally appropriate, challenging, diverse, creative and enriching experiences for all children (e.g. a range of toys to offer stimulation of all senses... including paint, play-dough, sand water and finger paint, toys and materials that support all areas of development)
- (e) The outdoor environment provides a range of developmentally appropriate, challenging, diverse, creative and enriching experiences (e.g. ... opportunities for challenge and safe risk, ...)

The Child, Health, Welfare & Development Assessment Guide (Health Services Executive, 2011)

Section 4 Programme of activities and its implementation

(a) **Play** (creative, manipulative, imaginative, physical)

(b) **Language development** (singing, rhymes, reading stories, story telling)

Each child

(c) **is enabled to participate actively ... in activities, in conversations and in all other appropriate situations, and is considered as a partner by the adult**

(d) **has opportunities to make choices, is enabled to make decisions, and has her/his choices and decisions respected**

(e) **has opportunities and is enabled to take the lead, initiate activity, be appropriately independent and is supported to solve problems**

(f). **Opportunities for play...give the child the freedom to achieve mastery and success, and challenge the child to make the transition to new learning and development**

(g) **Planning is based on the child's individual profile, which is established through systematic observation and assessment for learning.**

The policy challenge - key conclusions ...and a question

- ECEC in Ireland is progressing...there is no going back
- There is little in ECEC policy that is impeding deepening of quality ECEC; the challenge is in policy ***implementation***
- How do we develop a 'whole society' approach to implementing quality ECEC?



References

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