Placing Early Childhood Research on the Map

Symposium
School of Education, TCD

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Presentation layout

• Welcome and context

• Early Childhood Education and Care – the Big Picture

• Reframing Early Childhood Education

• Towards an Early Childhood Education research collaborative
Welcome and context

• Why have a symposium?
  – Opportunity for discussion on research possibilities
  – Planning around opportunities and research gaps

• Why now?
  – Some key events – academic and political
  – A role for research in influencing change

• Why early childhood education?
  – A rich field for research
  – Potential for impact on the quality of children’s lives
The Big Picture

• Early Childhood Research encompasses a very broad range of disciplines and research modalities

• Dissemination – OMEP; ECI; PSI; Start Strong; ESAI; HEIs and more

• Funding EC research – Irish Research Council; DCYA; DES; Philanthropy; EU
  – GUI
  – Prevention and Early Intervention
  – Specialist research focus e.g. NCCA and ERC
  – Small scale research e.g. NEYAI/ABC/Doctoral and Masters research support
The Big Picture

- Audit of research – 1990s
CECDE Audit (2007)

- Broad parameters of research material including: books, chapters, journal articles, conference papers, policy papers, submissions, position papers, postgraduate theses/research and international comparative studies

- Identified 24 themes – 16 linked to the 16 Síolta standards and 8 general themes
CECDE Audit (2007)

• Pattern of research development:
  1990 – 1998  354 references
  1999 – 2006  1,358 references [including 205 references for 2006]

• Most common topics:
  Curriculum       118
  Professional practice  67
  Quality           54
CECDE Audit (2007)

- Underrepresented areas/research gaps:
  - Children’s Rights/Voices
  - Transitions
  - Quality
  - Parents/families
  - Educational Disadvantage, integrated approaches
  - Special needs- effective interventions
  - Training, qualifications and quality of practice
  - Cultural diversity in ECCE
  - International perspective
  - Longitudinal research

- Current research status— ???
Re-framing Early Education Research

• Zeitgeist!
  – CRNINI Early Years sub group
  – Forthcoming conferences e.g. Reconceptualising Early Childhood Education annual conference, Dublin 2015

• Terminology, transitions and tensions – a turbulent, contested space

• Factors to consider:
  – ECE identity
  – Training and professional development within ECE
  – Curricular developments
  – Pedagogy
  – Assessment – of and for learning
Re-framing Early Education Research

• Future direction for research?
  – Theorising early education in Ireland
  – Informing a conceptual framework for continuity of pedagogy, curriculum, assessment within existing frameworks of quality [Síolta] and curriculum [Aistear/PS] across the ECE span
  – Interrogating the underlying early education philosophy
  – Making visible the day to day of children’s learning experiences

• Future Actions?
  – Collaborative research projects
  – High impact publications
  – ERC/Horizon 2020 projects
Towards an early education research collaborative

• Current developments in curriculum and practice – the early education landscape:

ECEC: Birth - - - 6 [compulsory school age]

*Trend 1:*

ECE Birth - 3:4 [including FPSY]

Primary School 4+ - - - 12

*Transition at 4+*

*Trend 2:*

ECE Birth - -3

EC & Primary 3 - - - 8 [curriculum]

*Transition at 3+*
A modest [research] proposal

• Theme:
  The alignment of early childhood education and primary education: Continuity and quality in curriculum and pedagogy

• Influences include:
  – Personal background in developmental psychology and education
  – Current research activities – CPD in context/Arts in ECE practice
  – IRC (2013) School Readiness Project

• Actions:
  – Planning research project elements [2015-2017]
  – Seek out funding – local and international
  – Conference [October 2015/March 2016]
Early childhood education is about our children - now and into the future.
Thank You 😊