A European perspective on ECEC quality

Pauline Slot
November 20th 2019
Importance of early childhood

ECEC can play a crucial role in promoting optimal development!
ECEC as competent system

Centre- and family-based ECEC

ECEC system, policy, monitoring, regulation

Age 0-6 years

Slot, 2018
Different perspectives on quality

- **Process quality** – quality of interactions, the ‘how’:
  - Emotionally secure, autonomy supporting
  - Developmentally stimulating

- **Curriculum quality** – content of interactions, the ‘what’:
  - Knowledge and skills, social competences, attitude
  - Values and norms, moral development

- **Structural quality** – quality of preconditions
  - Characteristics of group
  - Characteristics of staff
  - Characteristics of environment (space, furnishing, materials)

- **Organizational quality** – quality of context
  - Working conditions, PD, organizational climate
  - Mission, engagement, involvement of parents and neighborhood, external collaboration

Child well-being and developmental outcomes

Important preconditions for high process and curriculum quality
European Quality Framework

ECEC Working group under auspices of EC, 2014: 10 quality statements on the following transversal issues:

• Access to ECEC
• ECEC workforce
• Curriculum
• Monitoring and evaluation
• Governance
European CARE Quality framework
(CARE: EU-funded project 2014-2016)

• Quality of policy and legislation (local/regional/national level)
  – Availability, affordability, outreach
  – National curriculum and quality guidelines
  – Staff education and working conditions
  – Quality monitoring and assurance

• Centre/service level
  – Mission, developmental/educational goals and pedagogy
  – Leadership, organizational climate
  – Professional development, quality monitoring and improvement
  – Participation, communication and family-centre partnerships
  – Structural quality conditions
  – Partnerships with external organizations

Moser et al., 2016
European CARE Quality framework
(CARE: EU-funded project 2014-2016)

• Quality and well-being at the group (classroom) and educator level
  – Process quality
  – Curriculum quality
  – Wellbeing and inclusiveness

• Quality and well-being at child level
Process and curriculum quality in European ECEC
ECEC across Europe split vs integrated systems

• Countries with unitary systems more education-oriented ECEC, rather than “ECEC as a labour market tool”

• Reflected in status and content of curriculum: legal status, and **holistic** view of the child, **broad ranging developmental-educational domains**

Sylva et al., 2015
European CARE project: multiple case study across 7 countries

- Overall high on *Emotional* and *Behavioral Support* and *Classroom Organization*
- Lower on *Educational/Instructional Support* & more variation

0-3 classrooms (\(N = 14\))

3-6 classrooms (\(N = 14\))
Variation across activities and situations:
- Play
- Academic/educational
- Creative
- meals/routines

European CARE project: multiple case study across 7 countries

Slot et al., 2016
European CARE project: Reported implemented curriculum in six countries

- Different balances between play, self-regulation and pre-academic activities.

- Shifts in balances between activities from toddlerhood to kindergarten age:
  - Increased pre-academics at the expense of play (Finland, Poland, Portugal).
  - Increased pre-academics with play opportunities remaining the same (England, Italy, Netherlands).

- It is possible to combine playfulness with pre-academics.

Slot et al., 2016
Structural and process quality
Current state-of-affairs on **relations between structural and process quality** for toddlers.

- Less research to draw from compared to education for 3-5 yr-olds, but similar patterns
- Overall most evidence on classroom and staff level indicators

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**Table 5.1. Summary of main findings for provisions for children aged 0 to 2.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System or policy level</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>+</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1 US small-scale studies</th>
<th>2 studies showed moderate associations between GRIUS rating and process quality. 1 study failed to show correlations, but distinguished between lower and higher quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountability/Quality monitoring and rating improvement systems (GRIUS)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>3 US small-scale studies</td>
<td>2 studies showed moderate associations between GRIUS rating and process quality. 1 study failed to show correlations, but distinguished between lower and higher quality</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centre level</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>+</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1 US study and 1 Portuguese study</th>
<th>The U.S. study showed higher quality in not-for-profit provisions, but the Portuguese study showed no differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type non-profit</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>1 US study and 1 Portuguese study</td>
<td>The U.S. study showed higher quality in not-for-profit provisions, but the Portuguese study showed no differences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type is rural</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>1 Portuguese study</td>
<td>The U.S. study showed higher quality in not-for-profit provisions, but the Portuguese study showed no differences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type is daycare</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>2 Dutch studies</td>
<td>The U.S. study showed higher quality in not-for-profit provisions, but the Portuguese study showed no differences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliation professional organisation</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>1 US study</td>
<td>The U.S. study showed higher quality in not-for-profit provisions, but the Portuguese study showed no differences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management quality</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>1 study from South Africa</td>
<td>The U.S. study showed higher quality in not-for-profit provisions, but the Portuguese study showed no differences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working conditions, e.g. salary</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>1 Portuguese study</td>
<td>The U.S. study showed higher quality in not-for-profit provisions, but the Portuguese study showed no differences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom level</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>+</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>13 studies across the world (5 US)</th>
<th>The majority of studies (10 out of 12) showed a significant negative relation between ratio and process quality (3x the Netherlands, 2x Portugal, Canada and Flemish Comm. of Belgium)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child-staff ratio</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>13 studies across the world (5 US)</td>
<td>The majority of studies (10 out of 12) showed a significant negative relation between ratio and process quality (3x the Netherlands, 2x Portugal, Canada and Flemish Comm. of Belgium)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group size</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>13 studies across the world, including 1 cross-country comparison study (5 US)</td>
<td>The majority of studies (8 out of 13) showed a negative association between group size and process quality (3x the Netherlands, 2x Portugal, Flemish Comm. of Belgium)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% immigrant or multilingual children</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>2 studies</td>
<td>The majority of studies (8 out of 13) showed a negative association between group size and process quality (3x the Netherlands, 2x Portugal, Flemish Comm. of Belgium)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Staff level</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>+</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>12 studies across the world (6 US), including 1 meta-analysis across countries</th>
<th>The majority of studies (10 out of 11) including the meta-analysis showed positive relations between staff qualifications and process quality (Canada, Flemish Comm. of Belgium, Portugal, the Netherlands)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-service qualifications</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>12 studies across the world (6 US), including 1 meta-analysis across countries</td>
<td>The majority of studies (10 out of 11) including the meta-analysis showed positive relations between staff qualifications and process quality (Canada, Flemish Comm. of Belgium, Portugal, the Netherlands)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-service training/Professional development</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>3 studies (1 US), including 1 meta-analysis</td>
<td>The majority of studies (10 out of 11) including the meta-analysis showed positive relations between staff qualifications and process quality (Canada, Flemish Comm. of Belgium, Portugal, the Netherlands)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work experience</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>10 studies across the world (6 US)</td>
<td>The majority of studies (10 out of 11) including the meta-analysis showed positive relations between staff qualifications and process quality (Canada, Flemish Comm. of Belgium, Portugal, the Netherlands)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-being, job satisfaction</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>2 studies across the world (6 US)</td>
<td>The majority of studies (10 out of 11) including the meta-analysis showed positive relations between staff qualifications and process quality (Canada, Flemish Comm. of Belgium, Portugal, the Netherlands)</td>
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</table>

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Slot, 2018
Relations between structural and process quality based on Dutch study

Slot et al., 2015
The Netherlands as a case in point
### Dutch ECEC system: double split system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Home-based care (10%)</th>
<th>Centre-based day care (45%)</th>
<th>Preschool (40%)</th>
<th>Kindergarten (100% primary school)</th>
<th>After-school care (10%)</th>
<th>Primary school (100%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-2</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2-4</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-6</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **85-90%** of Dutch children uses some form of ECEC before age 4
  - Modal use: 18 hours per week in day care, 5 to 10 hours in preschool
- **100%** uses ECEC (kindergarten) from age 4 to age 6
  - Modal use: 20 hours per week; compulsory from age 5
85-90% of Dutch children uses some form of ECEC before age 4
  o Modal use: 18 hours per week in day care, 5 to 10 hours in preschool
100% uses ECEC (kindergarten) from age 4 to age 6
  o Modal use: 20 hours per week; compulsory from age 5
Quality of daycare over time – ITERS/ECERS

Huge expansion of daycare sector from 59,000 to 280,000 places


- Furnishing and space
- Interaction
- Language
- Programme
- Activities
- Total

Introduction of marketization/Child care Act
Additions/revisions to Child care Act
Additions/revisions to Child care Act

Universiteit Utrecht
Focus of Dutch Child Care act of 2005 and quality monitoring

- Process quality – quality of interactions, the ‘how’:
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  - Developmentally stimulating
- Curriculum quality – content of interactions, the ‘what’:
  - Knowledge and skills, social competences, attitude
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- Structural quality – quality of preconditions
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  - Characteristics of staff
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- Organizational quality – quality of context
  - Working conditions, PD, organizational climate
  - Mission, engagement, involvement of parents and neighborhood, external collaboration
Additions/revisions to Child Care Act of 2005

- *Promoting Development through Quality and Education Act (2010):* stronger educational function to provide all children with better and equal opportunities for broad development and learning

- *Act Innovation and Quality of Child Care (2018-2023):*
  - Further differentiation of children-to-staff ratio for infants and young/older school-aged children
  - Overall raise of language proficiency of teachers
  - Appointment of senior pedagogical staff to provide coaching (min. 10hrs for fulltime position per year) and implement pedagogical policy minimum amount of hours of coaching for every teacher
Relations of organizational characteristics with process and curriculum quality
Large-scale Dutch study in 2012: pre-COOL

- Survey among managers of 120 child care centers for 0-4 year olds and preschools for 2- to 4-year-olds.
- Survey among 375 teachers (nested within centres) on curriculum of activities and play.

- Analysis of pre-COOL data at the **organization level** (following Mintzberg, 1983):
  - Size and legal form of the organization.
  - Educational leadership.
  - Systematic professionalization and teamcohesion.
  - Outreach to ‘difficult-to-reach’ target populations.
  - Flexibility of contracts, opening hours, changing of days.
  - Mission and external profile.

Van der Werf, Slot, Kenis, & Leseman, 2018
Cluster analysis: 4 organisation types (managers’ reports)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Modern professional organisations (mainly educational half-day program) ($N_{\text{organizations}}=41$)</th>
<th>2 Small, diversified organisations (mainly full-day childcare) ($N_{\text{organizations}}=19$)</th>
<th>3 Large, diversified for-profit organisations (full-day childcare) ($N_{\text{organizations}}=30$)</th>
<th>4 Traditional-hybrid professional organisations (mainly half-day) ($N_{\text{organizations}}=30$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Size</strong></td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>small</td>
<td>large</td>
<td>large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legal form</strong></td>
<td><strong>non-profit foundation</strong></td>
<td>mixed</td>
<td><strong>for-profit company</strong></td>
<td>mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
<td>central, educational</td>
<td>decentral, mixed tasks</td>
<td>decentral, mixed tasks</td>
<td>mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flexibility of contracts</strong></td>
<td>low</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outreach to parents</strong></td>
<td>high</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professionalization</strong></td>
<td>high</td>
<td>low</td>
<td><strong>low</strong></td>
<td>medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teamorientation</strong></td>
<td>high</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Client-centered profile</strong></td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational profile</strong></td>
<td><strong>high</strong></td>
<td>low</td>
<td>low</td>
<td><strong>low</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creativity profile</strong></td>
<td>high</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inclusiveness profile</strong></td>
<td><strong>high</strong></td>
<td>low</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Small scale profile</strong></td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 hybrid due to recent takeovers of smaller (public) preschools by large private daycare providers

Van de Werf et al., 2018
Process quality (with the CLASS)

- Positive climate
- Negative climate (high score, more negativity)
- Sensitivity
- Child-centeredness
- Behavioral regulation
- Facilitation of learning
- Quality of feedback
- Language modelling

Engaged professional organizations
Small client-centered for-profit organizations
Large multi-site for-profit organizations
Traditional professional-bureaucratic organizations

\[ d = 1.34 \]

Van de Werf et al., 2018
Replication with 2017/2018 data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation types (N = number of centers)</th>
<th>Traditional non-profit professional-bureaucratic (N=38)</th>
<th>For-profit large-scale service-oriented (N=44)</th>
<th>Engaged mixed-profit professional (N=35)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal form (foundation vs. company)</td>
<td>0,97</td>
<td>0,32</td>
<td>0,79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profit goal (share holders)</td>
<td>0,00</td>
<td>0,64</td>
<td>0,18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several forms of care &amp; education</td>
<td>0,32</td>
<td>0,71</td>
<td>0,73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allround vs. pedagogical leadership</td>
<td>0,37</td>
<td>0,77</td>
<td>0,23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy of the manager</td>
<td>0,69</td>
<td>0,63</td>
<td>0,36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of the center</td>
<td>0,16</td>
<td>0,63</td>
<td>0,09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff with permanent contract</td>
<td>0,61</td>
<td>0,30</td>
<td>0,65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility regarding client contracts</td>
<td>0,20</td>
<td>0,59</td>
<td>0,21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive cultural-diversity climate</td>
<td>0,16</td>
<td>0,26</td>
<td>0,65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse professionalisation activities</td>
<td>0,43</td>
<td>0,53</td>
<td>0,83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team-oriented professionalisation</td>
<td>0,14</td>
<td>0,60</td>
<td>0,69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profile: service to clients</td>
<td>0,26</td>
<td>0,75</td>
<td>0,41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profile: inclusive-emancipatory</td>
<td>0,29</td>
<td>0,18</td>
<td>0,90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact parents: thematic meetings</td>
<td>0,23</td>
<td>0,55</td>
<td>0,72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact parents: active outreach</td>
<td>0,14</td>
<td>0,08</td>
<td>0,59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact with neighborhood schools</td>
<td>0,46</td>
<td>0,25</td>
<td>0,79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact with neighborhood services</td>
<td>0,43</td>
<td>0,34</td>
<td>0,90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Process quality, curriculum and CPD
(Educators’ reports and observations with the CLASS)

- Participation in PD at the center
- Frequency of whole-team meetings
- Importance of equal opportunities for children
- Inclusive attitudes towards children and...
- Explicit policy to provide care for additional...
- Individualized education and remediation...
- Positive attitude towards group inclusiveness
- Stimulating collaborative-inclusive group...
- Play activities
- Language & literacy activities
- Mathematical activities
- Science & technology activities
- Intercultural activities & celebrations
- Observed emotional process quality (CLASS)
- Observed educational process quality (CLASS)

Legend:
- Traditional-bureaucratic professional centers
- Large scale multicenter for-profit companies
- Engaged mixed for/non-profit professional centers
Child outcomes and combating early inequalities
Effects of ECEC on child outcomes

• Positive **short term** effects on cognitive, language, social-emotional development and school achievement (e.g. Barnett, 2011; Camilli, Vargas, Ryan, & Barnett, 2010; Gormley et al., 2005; Manning, Homel, & Smith, 2010; Nelson, Westhues, & MacLeod, 2003; Schoon et al., 2015)
  
  - Effect the strongest for cognitive and language development and school achievement, weaker for social emotional skills (Camilli et al., 2010; Nelson, Westhues, & MacLeod, 2003)

• Positive **long term** effects on educational careers, adult employment and earnings, criminal activity, and health (Heckman, Pinto, & Savelyev, 2013; Schoon et al., 2015)

McCoy et al 2017
Early disparities in children’s development at age 2 years (2000+ children): evidence from the Netherlands

Language and cognitive functions

Self-regulation and problem behaviour

- Dutch language
- Cool Executive Functions
- Hot Executive Functions
- Task orientation (T)
- Attention (P)
- Inhibitory control (P)
‘Catch up’ effect of vocabulary and attention skills from age 2- to 5 years ($N=3000+$ children)

Selective attention
‘Find the elephants’
Gerhardstein Rovee-Collier, 2002; Scerif et al., 2004
5 van de 40    3 trials

Receptive vocabulary (PPVT)
‘Where is... plane?’
PPVT-III-NL; Dunn, Dunn & Schlichting, 2005

PreCOOL consortium, 2016
Predictors of children’s gains in vocabulary from age 2-5 years (N≈1400)

Leseman et al., 2017
Predictors of children’s gains in selective attention skills from age 2-5 years (N≈1400)

- Predictors:
  - Observed emotional quality T1
  - Observed instruction quality T2
  - Affective support T2
  - Guided play at T2

- Groups:
  - Low-educated parents
  - Middle-high educated parents

Leseman et al., 2017
Conclusions

• High process and curriculum quality vital for child well-being and development
  – Especially for disadvantaged and vulnerable children

• High quality ECEC requires a competent system with favourable conditions at the teacher (e.g. qualifications), classroom (e.g. group size, ratio), centre (e.g. mission, PD opportunities) and (local/regional/national) policy level (e.g. quality monitoring (and improvement) system, curriculum)

• The modern professional organization (client-centred and social-educational mission, broad developmental profile, systematic professionalization, non-profit) provides highest emotional and educational process quality and balanced curriculum of play and activities.
Further information

• See the project website of the CARE project: www.ecec-care.org including a video library of good practices

• More information on educational inequalities and strategies to combat them, see the project website of the ISOTIS project:
  • www.isotis.org

• For easy-to-read and up-to-date scientific knowledge, see the project website of the Early Years Blog www.earlyyearsblog.eu
Process quality 2017-2018

Emotional quality

Educational quality

Slot et al., 2019
Children’s well-being and involvement

Wellbeing

Involvement

daycare 0-4  preschool 2-4  after school  childminder  daycare 0-4  preschool 2-4  after school  childminder

Slot et al., 2019