

**PARIS CONGRESS ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
SUMMARY REMARKS TO SESSION 7
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GENERAL HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CONFERENCE

A reoccurring theme that has emerged through this congress is that addressing inequity is the imperative of our time.

- It limits the lives, and the life chances, of children
- Is a drag on economic growth and stability
- Is a barrier to democratic, pluralistic societies
- And threatens the very security of our globe as it fuels environmental degradation and regional and social unrest.

“Inequity begins in utero and grows throughout the life cycle”

Early Education and Care is an important tool in closing the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged.

- **Early education is most likely to meet its goals where:**
 - There is a view of young children as citizens deserving of a fair share of public resources
 - There is a universal approach to access, with special efforts made to include vulnerable children and communities
 - It is supported by stable and sufficient public funding
 - Is integrated with childcare and linked to health, nutrition and family supports.
 - Policy-making is supported by evidence based research and informed personnel who know how to interpret and operationalize the evidence at a national, regional and community level.
 - Training, program guidelines and other professional resources support the workforce.

- There is an infrastructure of research, evaluation and monitoring that informs service planning and supports local management and ECE service providers.
- Families are engaged in their children's programs
- ECE has many allies, with a broad understanding of ECE and who promotes its value.

-There was a consensus around the above issues-

There has been some debate around:

- The role of education in the provision of early education – does it lead to “schoolification” or “playification”?
- Whether the focus should be on early childhood **education** or early childhood **development**. This is a topic we will explore further during the questions and answers.

We were cautioned that international forums and declarations are useful vehicles to identify trends and to share promising practices: They are not prescriptions for policy making. Context matters.

- Finally we should put our limited progress into perspective. In asking for universal early education we are asking for something really big. It is as big an ask as health care, old age security, public education, or unemployment insurance and social welfare was in the last century.
- But we are asking for a new social program in an environment where the prevailing dialogue is ‘limited resources’, government should be small, no tax is a good tax, and increasing public spending is an anathema.
- This is where we heard about the need to circulate back to enlighten policy makers, and to recruit policy influencers to change the dialogue. ECE is not just another in a list of important policy goals; it is foundational to addressing inequality and its limitations for children, business, justice, security, and economic development.

KEY MESSAGES AND COMMENTS FROM PANEL OF RESPONDENTS

Eric Charbonnier, Analyst with Directorate for Education and Skills, OECD: Expert in education economics who will identify how to make indicators comparable

- Early Childhood Education is a key to success. It is essential for our systems' efficiency. Access to structured services must begin before age 3.
- A lot has been done in the last 10 years: ¾ children in OECD countries now have access to ECEC.

Yvan Grimaldi, Director, IRTS, France: Expert in early childhood professional education who will identify a vision for professional learning for early childhood educators.

- A main issue in respect of quality services is professional training. EC educators need to be trained in order to be able to address different issues/crisis (economic, family needs) as they may not have all the tools to deal with it - Things are moving fast and in order to be able for respond to inequality, training is very important.

Jean-Emmanuel Rodocanachi, Childcare Entrepreneur and founder of the Les Petits Chaperons Rouges - Childhood Solidarity Fund who will identify new early childhood pedagogical tools

- Measurement is important in many different settings including ECEC.
- We need to be able to implement what comes out from studies- the best knowledge should be provided to EC educators.
- Future generations of educators should be supported in order to be self-confident, resilient and to know how to deal with inequalities. They should be granted tools that facilitate the fact that they need to adapt quickly to the changing world, to be flexible.
- Services should not only be focused for vulnerable children- They should target every child- Children need to learn how to live together.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE Q & A PERIOD

QUESTION 1: WHY WAS THE CONGRESS' FOCUS ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION?

Answer given by Tove Mogstad Slinde, Norway

“Because ECEC is about doing good for children... about providing all children with the opportunity of starting strong: there is no care if there is no education.”

“It allows (children) to step into the world... to be part of the learning community”

“That is why we have been working so hard on pedagogical issues and to have a broader policy”

“It is about educating for being a citizen and part of something bigger”.

QUESTION 2: HOW DO WE MAKE PUBLIC INVESTMENT IN ECE A CENTRAL COMMITMENT FOR THE POLITICAL LEADERS?

Answer given by Libby Doggett, USA

“Political Leaders should be approached before they get elected”

“Important to identify people that are in leadership positions (like mayors) that might rise”

“Important to identify young leaders and think of how we could have them on our side now... get them stepped into our field so ... they can become great leaders”

QUESTION 3: HOW DO WE INCREASE POLICY MAKING AND POLICY IMPLEMENTATION CAPACITY?

Answer given by John van Ravens:

“By training but training has to be contextualized... it has to be done on site... train people where they are, as they work”

“If you are to work with consultants, let them be international consultants”

“Because of decentralization, you need to involve people at both national and local level... you need more people at the national level because they have to support people at the local level. You may need to organize things in a cascade... not only top down but also bottom up”

“You need tools (like planning tools) especially with the help of technologies... tools that facilitate the work at the local level”

Answer given by Mary Young, China:

“We need to raise awareness among all levels of politicians from municipalities all the way”

“We need to tailor that information to different audiences... not only on why of ECD but also on how we do it”

“Therefore we need that capacity building of those policy makers to install that culture of doing better in planning, design and evaluation”

“Measurement is important... if we don't have data, we don't have problems...”

“We need to shift from a deficit base... from talking about mortality, drop out, lack of enrollment ... to wellbeing and a population measure (like in Canada)... to help us monitor the outcomes of children and to reflect data”

QUESTION 4: HOW CAN WE REACH THE MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN?

Answer given by Benjamin Perks, Montenegro

“... It is (probably) time to re-evaluate the term “vulnerable”... (to differentiate) those affected by poverty, affected by exclusion and those affected by adversity”

“We need thorough research on the localized obstacles to inclusion (like distance that enables children to attend preschool)”

“We lack of proper strategy against adversity...”

“Until we address the taboo and have robust low cost localized child protection, it is difficult to address adversity...”

“We need parenting support and other kind of support to overcome adversity”

Answer given by Michael Trill, Australia

“From a business perspective... a misunderstanding might be that by stamping children with being vulnerable, money will come and solve everything...”

“The real challenge is to be able to reach out to children exposed to different circumstances...”

“We have got to mobilize actions and universal care because so many fail into the cracks if we don’t”

QUESTION 5: HOW DO WE BUILD CAPACITY FOR A QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE?

Answer given by Yvan Grimaldi, France

“By acting (also) early, on children themselves... by teaching them imagination and creativity”

“By offering continuous training...”

“By supporting professionals to be able to be flexible, to face different challenges”

Answer given by Jean-Emmanuel Rodocanachi, France

“We need to be more innovative in our way to train service providers... to train them in how to manage a team for example...”

“We need diversity within the workforce”

Answer by Amina Mwititu, Kenya

“It is important to invest in training but we also need to understand where the gaps are”

“When we develop programs, we need to know where are the capacity gaps... to ensure quality... some people have been trained 20 years ago and did not receive other training since”

“Important to involve government officers in training so they can adequately support teachers... so they can be part of the change”

“We have to be innovative... to be bold enough to create structures”

QUESTION 6: WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL INDICATORS TO MONITOR ECE INVESTMENT?

Answer given by Michel Boivin, Canada

“The short answer is language development... it is the best predictive indicator on development outcomes like school success”

“The longer answer, we should adopt a developmental view of monitoring developmental trajectories... there are quick changes in development from 0-5. So, to have a better view of development, we should have a developmental approach... assess children overtime.

Answer given by Eric Charbonnier, France

“We have more indicators (across jurisdictions) that we need to look at together to analyse investment and quality of ECE: initial training, indicators related to workforce (career profile, team work, spirit), on content of programs (innovative, creative, adaptable), on whether or not resources are share equally (the better trained educators should work with the most vulnerable children), on environment and families”

“By combining them, we could compare jurisdictions”.

QUESTION 7: Is there value in ECE being embedded into Education as a platform for both policy and practices?

Answer given by ToveMogstadSlinde, Norway

“Since 2006, Early Childhood Education is embedded into Education as a platform for both policy and practices in Norway...”

“We need to acknowledge that ECE is a unique stage in child development... to acknowledge the uniqueness of ECE”

“There has been change with research resources: a lot of money (has been invested) in developing a knowledge base... (but) dissemination is also important”

“How we make use of research resources and disseminate it with the practitioners and policy makers is important... we have heard brilliant examples on how the research can help bullet point better practices”

Answer given by Jane Bertrand, Canada

“Aligning what happened earlier with what happens later and to facilitate the flow of information makes sense”

“It is time we develop a common framework that takes us across the life circle... because the brain is not segregated 0-3/3-6/6-12: it is an integrated organ”

WRAP UP COMMENTS

We have heard we need concrete and nimble messaging and we need to consider who is doing the messaging.

- There is a heavy reliance on academics and champions to tell the ECE story, but there is also a huge workforce of practitioners who should be able to describe what they do, and why they are doing it. They are ECE’s most important messengers.

We need to appreciate the fit between evidence and public policy

- Research can identify promising practices but it is not the only driver of public policy. Research confirms that families are most important to children and their outcomes. But it is difficult for public policy to alter internal family dynamics. Early education is not as powerful as family, but public policy has many levers that impact access to, and the quality of, early education. This makes it an effective place to intervene.
 - Evidence may document the efficacy of an intervention, but if the model is too expensive or requires highly specialized resources, its use may be limited to specific circumstances.
- We have been encouraged to reach out and make new friends for early education and while that is true we also need to keep in mind the importance of policy makers. The decisions they make, the budgets they set, make a difference in children’s lives. We need to hold them to account.
 - We need to get along better. This is the elephant in the room. Friction is understandable. Competition for funding, different mandates and egos can get in the way of doing what is right for children. Every policy maker can point to an example where governments were prepared to act but infighting in the sector became the excuse for inaction.

These are a few of the takeaways from two rich days of deliberations. We will leave here with more information, more ideas for action and most importantly more friends who will help us make children the centre of our work.

| <p align="center">Key messages for policy makers</p> | <p align="center">Actions to be considered</p> |
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| <p>Early Childhood Education is a key to success. It is essential for our systems' efficiency. It is an effective place to intervene.</p> | <p>Access to structured services must begin before age 3.</p> <p>Mobilize actions and provide universal care is essential.</p> <p>Services should not only be focused for vulnerable children- They should target every child.</p> <p>Early education is most likely to meet its goals where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is a universal approach to access, with special efforts made to include vulnerable children and communities • It is supported by stable and sufficient public funding • Is integrated with childcare and linked to health, nutrition and family supports. • Policy-making is supported by evidence based research and informed personnel who know how to interpret and operationalize the evidence at a national, regional and community level. • There is an infrastructure of research, evaluation and monitoring that informs service planning and supports local management and ECE service providers. |

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| <p>To increase implementation capacity, we need to involve people at both national and local level... you need more people at the national level because they have to support people at the local level. You may need to organize things in a cascade... not only top down but also bottom up”</p> <p>We need thorough research on the localized obstacles to inclusion (like distance that enables children to attend preschool)”</p> <p>We should adopt a developmental view of monitoring developmental trajectories... there are quick changes in development from 0-5.</p> | <p>We need tools (like planning tools) especially with the help of technologies... tools that facilitate the work at the local level”</p> <p>Without low cost localized child protection, it is difficult to address adversity...” “We need parenting support and other kind of support to overcome adversity”</p> <p>To have a better view of development, we should have a developmental approach... assess children overtime.</p> |
| <p>Key messages for service providers</p> | <p>Actions</p> |
| <p>A main issue in respect of quality services is professional training. It is important to invest in training but we also need to understand where the gaps are”</p> | <p>Training, program guidelines and other professional resources should support the workforce.</p> <p>It is important to involve government officers in training so they can adequately support teachers... so they can be part of</p> |

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| | <p>the change”</p> <p>We need to be more innovative in our way to train service providers... to train them in how to manage a team for example bold enough to create structures”</p> |
| Families need to be engaged in children’s programs | |