



Towards Opportunities for Disadvantaged and
Diverse Learners on the Early childhood Road

Report

Promoting the Wellbeing of Toddlers within Europe

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Introduction to the Report

The TODDLER Project focuses on one of the EU Commission's priority themes for 2009-2010 identified in EURYDICE (2009), by supporting early years' practitioners, teachers and students in their understanding of how to promote development of toddlers (aged 18 to 36 months) from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds.

“The policy challenge, therefore, is to (re)build (current) systems of early childhood care and education that meet crucial design features as outlined above, that provide high quality care and education for all children, that are integrated, attractive and affordable to all families regardless social class or minority status, yet that is sensitive to differing educational needs and to compensate early educational disadvantages” (EURYDICE, 2009:39)

The aim of the TODDLER Project is to develop reflective practitioners who can promote and improve practice to provide effective early years care and education for diverse and disadvantaged toddlers in reaching their full potential.

This report has been compiled using experiences and expertise from each partner country exploring the different contexts and perspectives of wellbeing that influences practice. These materials have been left verbatim, as far as possible, to maintain the context and originality of each country.

Each partner has been asked to provide a definition of wellbeing and to identify their country's underpinning legislation and research on wellbeing. This information has been compiled into a report/handbook which can be used as teaching materials in conjunction with the PowerPoint.

Contents include:

- Definitions of wellbeing
- Theoretical backgrounds
- Literature Reviews
 - Curriculum documents
 - Piece of National Research
 - Recommended Reading

These materials are photocopyable for teaching purposes.



Portugal

Definitions of wellbeing

Wellbeing is when the children - the learners in general - in a given context feel well, at ease, act spontaneously, show confidence, energy and basic needs (in the sense given by Maslow) are satisfied.

Laevers, F. (2005). *Sics (Ziko). Well-Being and Involvement in Care a Process-Oriented Self-Evaluation Instrument for Care Settings*. Research Centre for Experiential Education Leuven University: K &G.



Portugal

Theoretical background to children's wellbeing

Within the overall framework of decisions on educational policies and investment in a quality education, since early years, is essential to the welfare, development and learning of children, educational success and, more broadly, it is a factor of prevention in social exclusion. This is the role of early childhood education, in the meaning of attendance, education and care for children from 0-6 years (OECD, 2001).

In this framework, we believe that early childhood education covers children from 0 to 6 years as essential, in the interface with social policies, linked to the families, who are combating social exclusion, to the creation of support networks for families and local development. Without an ecological perspective to the various levels of education and care for children, the impact of policies will remain ineffective. However, in Portugal, as it happens in other European countries, the children's education under 3 years continues to be distinguished from pre-school education, defined in the Educational system law (Law 46/1986, amended by Law 49/2005) and the framework law for pre-school education (Law 5 / 1997) regarding children from 3 years until the age of compulsory school which is (6 years old).

The coordination of all host children under 3 years is currently taken by the Social Security Services, whose competence belongs to the Ministry of Education regarding to children under 3 years. This question has been a social and education concern, which has mobilized many efforts specially those that are related to professional organizations. This is clearly demonstrated by the study done in 2001 by the OECD, in Portugal, which, among other things is considered as a strategic error, this distinction defending that the pedagogical supervision of all nursery education should be assumed by the Ministry of Education and that the development of the network for care of children under 3 years should be a political priority (ME/OECD, 2001). In fact, a concept of lifelong learning, constantly reaffirmed by the European guidelines, can hardly conceive that education begins at age 3. The most recent data we have about the coverage rates of children from 0 to 3 years indicate the existence of coverage rates of only 12.6%. In a country whose rate of full-time women workers is the highest in Europe, where are children of those ages welcomed? Despite some troubling reports of situations that work clandestinely, it is still necessary to develop a regulation and supervision of all support structures for young children.

While much has been achieved after April 1974, and after the reform of preschool education in 1997, we found that there are still problems to be overcome in relation to the education of children under three years of teaching and supervision of preschool education establishments.

Beyond the main policy priority to develop the institutional network of early childhood in some parts of the country, lack of places for young children is still a difficult problem at the society level, given the large number of women who work outside the home. In fact, Portugal deals with some specific and special conditions which have impact on social and educational system (OECD, 2004): more than 20% of such households with a child under the age of 6 lives on the poverty threshold; comparing

to Northern Europe, Portugal seem less affected by single parenting households with at least one child under 6; women's economic activity remains stable because in practice they continue to work while their children are under 6; Portugal stands out as the country with the most gender equitable allocation of paid work: about 9 out of 10 women (and mothers) works full time; in Portugal women work almost as many hours as men; participation rates in pre-primary education for under 3 is 25% and the economical contribution of the families is expected.

Despite government efforts during the last years, institutional coverage rate is still very poor for children under 3 years - about 30% (based on available data in the web page of the Government). For children aged 3 to 6 years, the institutional coverage is about 80%, with a universal set for all children 5 years old. On the other hand, several regulations were introduced directly or indirectly aimed at improving the work and family life reconciliation of families with children. We give some examples: with the framework law of social security a 13th month payment of child allowance was introduced for low-income families; greater focus on tailored professional training for labour market reintegration after longer periods of maternity leave or special leave to look after children; the new labour code introduced the possibility to extend maternity leave over a longer period while receiving a reduced benefit payment. (OECD, 2004)

Take into account also the latest report from the OECD, *Starting Strong II* (2006) which points out a set of lines that seem important to take into account when outlining strategies for this field of education. Following this, work is in progress, a new OECD study, that aims at the development of early childhood education from 0 to 6 years, giving special emphasis to the development of education and social support of children under 3 years.

References:

ME/OECD (2001). *Early Childhood Education and Care Policy in Portugal*, Lisboa: ME

OECD (2001). *Starting Strong: Early Childhood Education and Care. Education and Skills*. Paris: OCDE.

OECD (2004). *Babies and Bosses - Reconciling Work and Family Life* (Volume 3). New Zealand, Portugal and Switzerland.

OECD (2006). *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care*. Paris: OCDE.



Portugal

Literature Review

Curriculum Documents

Instituto de Solidariedade Social, I.P. (2005). Modelo de Avaliação da Qualidade – Creche. Portugal: ISS, I.P..

http://www2.seg-social.pt/preview_documentos.asp?r=16679&m=PDF

Instituto de Solidariedade Social, I.P. (2005). Manual de processos-chave – Creche. Portugal: ISS, I.P..

http://www2.seg-social.pt/preview_documentos.asp?r=16680&m=PDF

Instituto de Solidariedade Social, I.P. (2005). Questionários de avaliação da satisfação (clientes, colaboradores, parceiros) – Creche. Portugal: ISS, I.P..

http://www2.seg-social.pt/preview_documentos.asp?r=16681&m=PDF

Under the Social Welfare System, managed by the Institute of Social Security, IP, social support can be developed by social services and facilities to support individuals and families, involving the participation of different entities, namely, the integrated establishments, Private Social Solidarity Institutions (IPSS) and other public or private institutions.

Guaranteeing citizens access to quality services required to meet their needs and expectations is a challenge that requires the involvement and commitment of all stakeholders.

In this context, in order to provide a reference standard to assess the quality of services and consequently positively differentiate the social responses, ISS, IP, developed models for Quality Assessment of Social Responses, applicable to the Nursery and also seeking support the pedagogical level. However, as mentioned above, it is currently developing and is a job that involved Social Security, the Ministry of Education, experts from various training institutions, with the OECD to support the development of institutional framework and guidelines for teaching children under 3 years.

For children over 3 years (inclusive) there are curriculum guidelines* set by the Ministry of Education.

http://www.min-edu.pt/data/Orientacoes_curriculares_preescolar.pdf

National Research

Diário da República, 2ª série — Nº 79 — 21 de Abril de 2011. Recomendação nº 3/2011. A Educação dos 0 aos 3 anos.

Vasconcelos, T. (2011). *Recomendação dos 0 aos 3 anos*. CNE: Lisboa.

A set of questions concerned with education of children from 0 to 3 years, led to the preparation of this Recommendation, duly informed by the perspectives of government officials, local government and regional authorities, researchers, public entities and private responsibilities in monitoring children of this age level and the players "on the ground": children, families, professionals.

Beyond this reference, there are some doctoral and master's theses taking place within the early childhood education, aimed at the education of children under 3.

There is also a project of the Ministry of Education *Encouraging Quality in Early Childhood Education** (EEL model adapted from Tony Bertram and Christine Pascal) which began to cover children over 3 years and is now being adapted to children under 3 years.

<http://sitio.dgidec.minedu.pt/recursos/Lists/Repositrio%20Recursos2/DispForm.aspx?ID=813&RootFolder=%2Frecursos%2FLists%2FRepositrio%20Recursos2>

Recommended Reading

Portugal, G. (2003). *Crianças, Famílias e Creches. Uma Abordagem Ecológica da Adaptação do Bebê à Creche*. Porto Editora: Coleção CIDINE.

The theme of this book reflects recognition of the dilemma that many parents live with what is best for their children and the consequences of maternal separation in nursery and reception. It is intended as a work that makes available to educators in the broadest sense, a set of experiences that are judged worthy of reflection, helping to clarify and train all who are interested in promoting the welfare and development of children. It also aims to highlight any interaction child-family-day care, clarifying which factors or combination of factors that place the baby in a state of malaise providing clues pointing to the optimization of educational settings where the child develops.