

**Introducing continuity and equality
into a "split" system of early
child education and care:
an international perspective**

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- Split early childhood education and care (ECEC) systems: where every country starts...but dysfunctional today
- One policy response: integration within education
- Integration: potential benefits and risks
- Some lessons learned...so far

*Caring and Learning Together:
a cross-national study of ECEC within education*

Caring and Learning Together

- UNESCO-funded study by Yoshie Kaga, John Bennett and Peter Moss...2008-10
- Focus on one policy option: **integration in education**
- 6 cases: Brazil (1996), Jamaica (1998), New Zealand (1986), Slovenia (1996), Sweden (1998) + city of Gent (1980)...**national and local levels**
 - Why? How? How far? What results?
- 2 other options: integration in welfare (Finland) **and** split systems (Flanders, France, Hungary)
 - Why **not** integrate in education?

Split ECEC systems

Where every country starts...

'Childcare': working parents, poor...wider use now;
under 3s; 'care' workers



'Early education': middle class...wider use now (often
universal); over 3s; 'teachers'

Different split systems:

- 'childcare' dominant (Anglophone world)
- 'early education' dominant (Continental Europe)

Split ECEC systems ...but dysfunctional today

Problems recognised for a long time:

- **Inequality**: 'childcare'/under 3s get worse deal on places, access, funding, costs, workforce
- **Discontinuities**: for children and parents
- **Fragmentation**: hinders holistic approach
- **Divisive**: weakens ECEC, increases risk of schoolification

Policy options

Options proposed to reduce problems of split systems:

- **Improve coordination** between sectors...
limited solution, limited effect
- **Integrate** sectors into one system:
 - **Welfare**...only Denmark and Finland
 - **Education**...5 countries in study + England, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway, Slovenia, Spain

But not all are fully integrated

Integration within education

What does integration mean?

Full integration = 8 dimensions

Structural (1-7)

- Policy making and administration
- Regulation
- Curriculum
- Access
- Workforce
- Type of provision
- Funding

+ Conceptual (8)

Integration within education

What does integration mean?

Countries on the integration continuum

Split system



Partial integration (1-7 dimensions)



Full integration (8 dimensions)

What does integration mean?

England: partial integration, 3 dimensions

- Administration ✓ Education
- Regulation ✓
- Curriculum ✓
- Access x
- Workforce x
- Provision x
- Funding x
- Concept x

Integrated government responsibility for all ECEC –
but still two systems ('childcare' and 'early education')

What does integration mean?

Sweden: full integration

- Administration ✓ education
- Regulation ✓
- Curriculum ✓
- Access ✓
- Workforce ✓
- Provision ✓
- Funding ✓
- Concept ✓

Full structural and conceptual integration...
a seamless system for children from 1 to 5 years

Full integration in practice

(i) structural integration in Sweden

- **Curriculum:** 'Curriculum for pre-school' (1-5)
- **Access:** universal entitlement from 12 months for *all* children
- **Workforce:** graduate early years (1-5) teacher (50%+)
- **Provision:** 'pre-schools' (centres) for 1-5s
- **Funding:** tax-based + free period for 3-5s + maximum fee (€92/46/46 per child per month)

Full integration in practice
(ii) conceptual integration:
'holistic pedagogy'

*The pre-school should be characterised by a **pedagogical approach, where care, nurturing and learning form a coherent whole** (Swedish pre-school curriculum, 1998)*

*Parents now expect a **holistic pedagogy** that includes health care, nurturing and education for their pre-schoolers (Lenz Taguchi and Munkhammar, A Swedish case study for UNESCO, 2003)*

(ii) Conceptual integration:
'education in its broadest sense'

*(By the 1990s), 'early childhood education' had become the official term, as people took for granted that early education involved care as well – education is understood as **a broad, holistic concept, concerned with all aspects of well-being and development*** (Anne Meade & Val

Podmore, *A case study of New Zealand*, 2010;

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001872/187234e.pdf>)

Integration: *potential* benefits

- Rethinking ECEC, asking critical questions
- What is ECEC for?
- What do we mean by...Care? Education? Knowledge? Learning?
- What fundamental values? Ethics?
- What is your image of the child? the educator? the early childhood centre?

No re-structuring without re-thinking!

Integration: *potential* benefits

What image of the EC centre?

Mono-purpose service for a particular group
(e.g. 'childcare for working parents';
'education for 3-5s')

OR

Multi-purpose ***public space***...a forum or ***place of encounter*** for citizens (children & adults)...a ***collaborative workshop*** for communities...
many purposes and projects, some pre-defined, but others not

Integration: *potential* benefits

2. Improved status and resources for 0-3 services, e.g. workforce parity
 3. 3-6 services benefit from strengths of 0-3 services, e.g. work with parents, more holistic approach
- Improved continuity
 - Equality of access, e.g. extend entitlement to under 3s

Integration: *potential* benefits

More equal access

Children under 3 in formal services (2005)

Mother's level

of education

SW

FR

➤ Low

52

17

➤ Medium

56

30

➤ High

47

48

Integration: *potential* benefits

More equal access

The proportion of enrolled children has become more evenly distributed among Swedish municipalities...The importance of various background factors (e.g. parents' employment, foreign background) for participation in pre-school has decreased during the reform period (Skolverket, 2007)

Integration: *potential* benefits

5. Stronger ECEC system and opportunity to rethink relationship with compulsory schooling

e.g. beyond 'readying for school' ►► "a strong and equal partnership" (*Starting Strong*) & "the vision of a meeting place"

*“With a [shared] starting point of the image of the child as a constructor of culture and knowledge...[one could create] a meeting place where both pre-school teachers and primary school teachers are given the possibility to develop their pedagogical practice” (Gunilla Dahlberg and Hillevi Lenz Taguchi, *Preschool and school: two different traditions and the vision of a meeting place*, 1994)*

Integration: *potential* risks

- **Increased schoolification**: downward pressure of compulsory school through whole ECEC system...loss of strengths in 'childcare'
- **Weaker relationships with other services** for children and families
- **Increased costs as inequalities** tackled...but is that a risk or a benefit?

Some lessons learned...so far

- It is not either/or...split systems vary in balance between childcare and education...integration is a continuum
- Integration can take place at different levels – but is most effective when all levels participate and are committed
- Integration requires re-structuring **and** re-thinking: re-thinking gives re-structuring a strong rationale, direction and momentum