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
- 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 ✗
- Workforce ✗
- Provision ✗
- Funding ✗
- Concept ✗

Integrated government responsibility for all ECEC – but still two systems (‘childcare’ and ‘early education’).
What does integration mean?

Swedish: 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)
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>SW</th>
<th>FR</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 preschool 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