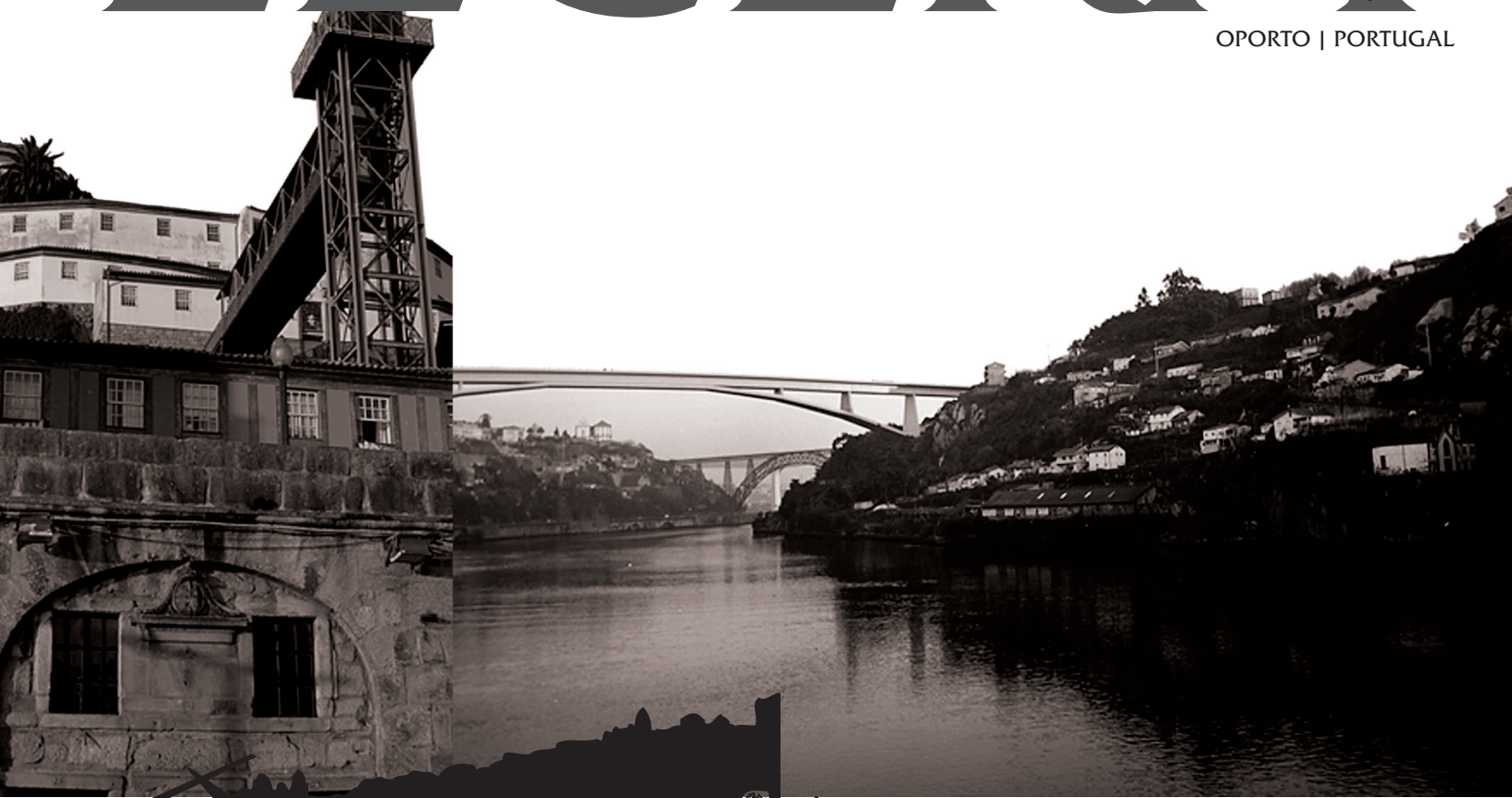


European Early Childhood Education Research Association

# EECERA

29th aug - 1st sep 2012

OPORTO | PORTUGAL



22<sup>ND</sup>

EECERA CONFERENCE

PRE-BIRTH TO THREE: identities, learning, diversities

## C7 'EARLY CHANGE': A CROSS-NATIONAL PROJECT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION QUALITY

Self-organised symposium

**CHAIR:** EVRIDIKI ZACHOPOULOU | Department of Early Childhood Care & Education, Alexander Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki, Greece

This symposium introduces the theoretical and methodological framework of 'Early Change' project. This project attempts to enhance the professional development of early educators, and to evaluate the quality of the early childhood education (ECE) environments of six countries. An overview and comparison of the quality of the ECE and care systems of the six countries that participate in the 'Early Change' Project will be presented. Moreover, the evaluation procedure will be explained in details. The basic presuppositions for the improvement of this quality are the enhancement of early educators' professional development and the systematic and multidimensional assessment of the provided education. Early educators will evaluate approximately 600 classrooms in six countries. Moreover, a wide range of 'good practices' implemented in these classrooms will be collected. These data will offer valuable information to the educational authorities and municipalities, and also to the authorities of the European Rese.

### *'Early Change' Project: Promoting the professional development of early childhood educators*

EVRIKIDIKI ZACHOPOULOU (1), VASILIS GRAMMATIKOPOULOS (2), MANUELA PESSANHA (3) AND ATHANASIOS GREGORIADIS (4) | (1) Alexander Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki, Greece, (2) University of Crete, Greece, (3) Polytechnic Institute of Porto, Portugal, (4) Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

The 'Early Change' project (<http://earlychange.teithe.gr>) attempts (i) to enhance the professional development of early educators, and (ii) to evaluate the early childhood education environments of European countries. The basic presuppositions for the improvement of the quality of early childhood education across Europe is the enhancement of early educators' professional development and the systematic and multidimensional assessment of the structural and the process quality of the provided education. Early educators from 6 countries will acquire skills that enhance their professional identity, and their self-assessment skills. They will be trained in using the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-R that evaluates the quality of early childhood environment. The project commenced on the 1st of December 2011 and its duration is 30 months. The participants are educators from 10 educational districts and academics from 9 Universities. The academics are responsible for the educators' training, which will include a mixed method training model combining both theoretical training and practical experience. The ethical considerations for these project have been submitted and approved from the EU. The key member staff of the project will take written permission from the parents of the children involved in the project's activities. Moreover, the project manager will ensure, by providing a written submission, the confidentiality and anonymity preservation of all participants. Through the project's outputs (scientific papers, presentations, web-site, e-book), the international academic community will have the opportunity to be informed, and exchange ideas and perceptions upon the specific educational domains. After its completion, the project will provide empirical data for the structural quality and the process quality of six European early childhood educational systems. These data will offer valuable information to the participated educational authorities and municipalities, and also to the authorities of the European Research, Policy and Strategy making.

**Keywords:** professional development; early childhood environment; evaluation

## *Quality assessment of early childhood education: A cross-national approach*

VASILIS GRAMMATIKOPOULOS (1), ATHANASIOS GREGORIADIS (2), TERESA LEAL (3), SILVIA BARROS (4) AND EVRIDIKI ZACHOPOULOU (5) | (1) University of Crete, Greece, (2) Aristotle University of Athens, Greece, (3) University of Porto, Portugal, (4) Polytechnic Institute of Porto, Portugal, (5) Alexandrio Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki, Greece

The purpose of this presentation is to discuss the theoretical and methodological framework of the evaluation strategy adopted in the Early Change project. Research has shown that ECE quality has short and long-term effects on child development (Taggart, Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Melhuish, & Sammons, 2008; Siraj-Blatchford, Taggart, Sylva, Sammons, & Melhuish, 2008). Thus, in our project a mixed method approach was adopted in order to build a robust body of data. Mixed method evaluation is considered as a very important strategy that exploits the benefits of both research paradigms (Creswell, & Plano Clark, 2010; Tashakkori, & Teddlie, 2010). In order to build a comprehensive knowledge of European (Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Portugal, and Romania) ECE practices, preschool teachers will be trained by an international research team in using the ECERS-R. Then, they will evaluate approximately 600 classrooms in their countries. Additionally, a wide range of 'good practices' implemented in these classrooms will be collected. This mixed method procedure intends to develop an integrated approach that combines qualitative and quantitative data from both researchers and practitioners perspectives. The ethical considerations of the project have been submitted and approved by the EU. The key member staff of the project will take written permission from the parents of the children involved in the project's activities. Moreover, the project manager will ensure by providing a written submission the confidentiality and anonymity preservation of all participants. The comparative data among several countries will be the foundation for a large database that will contain evidence concerning the quality of early childhood environments. The transnational sharing of experience across different early childhood environments can offer significant help to preschool teachers and other ECE professionals and contribute towards the direction of building a comprehensive view regarding the European educational settings.

**Keywords:** educational evaluation; early childhood environment; cross-national evaluation

## *Comparing early childhood education systems in six european countries*

ATHANASIOS GREGORIADIS (1), ELENI LOIZOU (2), VASILIS GRAMMATIKOPOULOS (3), ANA GAMELAS (4) AND EVRIDIKI ZACHOPOULOU (5) | (1) Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, (2) University of Cyprus, Cyprus, (3) University of Crete, Greece, (4) Polytechnic Institute of Porto, Portugal, (5) Alexandrio Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki, Greece

The purpose of this presentation is to provide an overview and comparison of the early childhood education and care systems of the six countries that participate in the Early Change Project. Early Change Project is a Comenius multilateral project that will attempt to evaluate the quality of early childhood education environments of six European countries, Greece, Portugal, Finland, Denmark, Cyprus and Romania (Duncan, & Te One, 2012; MacNaughton, & Davis, 2009). The purpose of this presentation is to provide an overview and comparison of the early childhood education and care systems of the six countries that participate in the Early Change Project (Samuelsson, & Fleeer, 2010). More specifically the current presentation will describe key features of early childhood education systems across Greece, Portugal, Finland, Denmark, Cyprus and Romania, highlighting the similarities and differences concerning various ECE issues. Several dimensions of the educational systems of

the six participating countries are examined: aspects of education and society (curriculum, teaching methods, educational finance, management structures), geographic and locational levels (individuals, classrooms, school districts, countries, policies, etc.). A mixed research method approach will be used for the examination of these dimensions. The methods used will be case studies, focus groups, Holmes' problem approach and Bereday's comparative method. The key member staff of the project will collect written permission-consent forms from the parents of the children involved in the project's activities. Moreover, the project manager will ensure all participants and gatekeepers with a written submission the confidentiality and anonymity preservation of all participants. In addition, all E.U ethics principles for research with children will be taken under consideration. The findings of this study reflect the diversity and complexity of early education across Europe. There are common goals and values that exist in some of the ECE systems. Yet, while there has been continuous increase in access and provision in many countries, more still remains to be done especially in terms of quality.

**Keywords:** early childhood education; comparative education; early childhood settings

## C8 LIVED SPACES FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS. SPACE FOR EMOTION: THE LIVED SPACE OF INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS IN INFANT-TODDLER CARE AND EDUCATION

Self organised-symposium

**CHAIR:** FRANCES PRESS | Charles Sturt University, Australia

This is the first of three symposia that draw together research from Australia, England, Finland, New Zealand and Sweden to explore the 'lived spaces' of infant and toddler care and education. Through this suite of nine papers, we present our diverse methodologies and interests in exploring the infant and toddler experience and how this is manifest in, and mediated by the many 'spaces' of the care and education environment. These spaces may be, for instance, relational, interactional, transitional, pedagogical, social, physical or temporal. In drawing together this research we highlight the diverse ways of understanding infants lived experience, and consider the implications of these understandings for the relationships, pedagogy, practices and policies generated and implemented within infant and toddler education and care.

### *'Permission to love them....but not too much': Developing professional love in early childhood settings*

JOOLS PAGE | University of Sheffield, England

We assume that attachment relationships in the home (primarily, in most instances, between a mother and her child) are fundamental to the healthy development of young children. Thus, when a mother returns to work following the birth of her baby, the decision making process about choice of child-care is likely to be difficult and complex. This paper draws upon Nel Noddings theoretical framework of the ethics of care to investigate the policies, practices and relationships which underpinned and influenced the decisions taken by 6 mothers in England to return to paid employment when their babies were under 12 months of age. Unstructured, deep level, face to face interviews lasting between 2-4 hours were carried out with each participant. The ethical dilemmas within qualitative research are far reaching. The particular issues of subjectivity, bias, and anonymity which can and do exist in life historical research are addressed. The paper draws upon the findings of a life historical study of 6 participant mothers. Individual deep level interviews were conducted following institutional ethical