



How Focused Intervention Supports Quality Provision for Early Years Professionals
in the Republic of Ireland

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**A dissertation presented to Dublin City University in fulfilment of the
requirements for the Professional Doctorate in Education**

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January 2017

Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctor of Education is entirely my own work, that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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ABSTRACT

The primary aim of the current thesis study was to identify that if by designing, developing and generating specific interventions for early years' professionals in services would the quality of their practice improve.

To achieve this aim, the study was divided into parts. A baseline test, the interventions and a retest of the baseline. The study was a randomised control study. The services were chosen from the different types of early years' educational provision offered in Ireland. Full day care where children are in care for more than 5 hours, sessional usually provides the free pre-school place (ECCE programme) where the children are in care for a maximum of 3 hours. These services are provided for either in the private sector, where the service is owned by a private individual, partnership or company. The alternative provision is a community service where the services is managed by a voluntary board of local stakeholders. In this study services were selected from both the private and the community sectors.

The first of these aims was twofold and sought to examine the current levels of the quality of provision in early years' educational settings, (n=5) and to establish a profile of early years' professionals. A baseline was required for the study, as it was important to be able to measure if there was any change in the quality of the provision from the starting point to the finish point. To obtain the baseline the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) and the Infant Toddler Rating Scale (ITERS) were used for each of the services. The profile of the early years' professionals was achieved through a demographic questionnaire generating a profile of professionals in each of the services.

The study considered existing documentation in the form of services policies and procedures and their most recent HSE/Tusla Inspection Report.

The findings indicate that the sector is predominantly female on low pay with little status. The minimum level of qualification was a QQI level 5 with 9% of the sample holding a QQI level 8. The second aim was to develop an intervention programme to support early years' providers in their delivery of services. The scores from ECERS and ITERS were used to develop the intervention programme provided. The programme targeted the delivery of the curriculum; provision of activities; interactions of staff with children (n=2). The third aim was to determine the effectiveness of the intervention programme. This was conducted by reusing the ECERS and ITERS and comparing the baseline to the results of the post intervention.

The findings indicate the services who received an intervention showed an overall improvement in the provision of activities and interactions with the children. Significant improvement in the environment and programme structure was found where the full team was engaged with the support of their manager. No differences were observed in the two services who did not receive the intervention. The findings indicate that targeted interventions can enhance the provision quality and practice with early years' professionals.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincere thanks to my colleagues in the early years' education field. Those from the past who lit the fire, to those who are supportive everyday always asking 'how can I help', as we fight the good fight.

Thanks to all my friends and family who supported, believed, babysat and proofed. Those who inspired, listened and motivated me. A special thanks to my mother-in-law Olive with whom there would have been no quiet times.

To my husband, Shane and three children Clodagh~Jane (7), Noah (5) and Bobby (3), for you I strive to be the best I can be. "Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage." (Lao Tzu). Thanks to you guys I had both the courage and the strength to do this.

Finally, to Dr Geraldine Scanlon, because of you I didn't give up. Thank You.

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ACRONMYNS

ACP	Association of Childhood Professionals
ADM	Area Development Management
AIM	Access Inclusion Model
BCCN	Border Counties Childcare Network
CCC	County/City Childcare Committee
CCS	Community Childcare Subvention
CECDE	Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education
CETS	Childcare Education and Training Scheme
CLASS	Classroom Assessment Scoring System
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CSER	Centre for Social and Educational Research
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
DES	Department of Education and Science
DIT	Dublin Institute of Technology
DJELR	Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform
DSP	Department of Social Protection
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECERS	Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale
ECI	Early Childhood Ireland
EOCP	Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme
EPPE	Effective Provision of Pre-school Education
EYEI	Early Years Education-focused Inspection
EYPU	Early Years Policy Unit
EYS	Early Years Services
FDC	Full Day Care
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HSE	Health Services Executive
INTO	Irish National Teachers Organisation
IPPA	Irish Preschool, Playgroups Association

IT	Institute of Technology
ITERS	Infant and Toddler Environment Rating Scale
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCIP	National Childcare Investment Programme
NCNA	National Childrens Nursery Association
NEYAI	National Early Years Access Initiative
NWCI	National Womens Council of Ireland
NQAI	National Qualifications Authority Ireland
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NUI	National University of Ireland
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OMC	Office of the Minister for Children
SESS	Sessional Care
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

1 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

What is quality in the early years? How to measure it and how to improve it? This research set out to look at these questions in an Irish context by gathering data on quality using a rating scale, designing and implementing interactions and reusing the rating scale to identify if any improvements occurred.

Over the coming chapters the reader will be introduced to the world of early years' education in Ireland what it is and how it has developed. According to Walsh (2016) in 1998 there was a general consensus that the early years' education sector needed a single co-ordinating agency to support quality development.

In 2016 Ireland has no national tool to measure levels of quality in the early years' education sector. What has been developed are two frameworks Síolta – The national quality framework for the early year (Centre Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE) 2006) and Aistear – the national curriculum Framework (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) 2009)

In the absence of having a baseline, a starting point on which to build quality, this study set out to get a starting point for services from where they actually were in delivering a quality early years' education service. The idea that the support interventions designed and provided would be based on identified needs within a service.

However, quality in early years' education is a complex issue and there were many issues to consider for this project. Melhuish (2004) considered issues such as timing, duration, type, quality and quantity of early years' provision as having developmental effects upon children. Sylva et al (2011) argue that the quality of care in early years' education settings relates to developmental outcomes however, measuring quality is never straightforward; it also has structural properties that are important. This study in as much as possible considered and used materials that were common to early years' educational services in an Irish context.

1.1 DEFINITION OF TERMS

This section will define the terms as they are to be used in this study. To date there is no agreed overall term that refers to the sector that provides care and education to children in the age bracket of 0-6 years, nor is there an agreed title for those who work within this sector.

1.1.1 The Sector

In different government documents the sector is referred to as many things for example. The term ‘Childcare’ as defined by the Expert Working group 2000 states childcare is day-care facilities and services for pre-school children and school-going children out of school hours. The definition goes on to describe what happens in the childcare services, they include education and socialisation opportunities for children. (Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform (DJELR) 1999). The 2016 Pre-school regulations refers to all services outside of school providing a care and educational service for children 0 to 6 years (Department of Health (DOH) 2016). In 2009, the Free-Preschool Year, a funding programme of early childhood care and education (ECCE), was launched for children aged between 3 years and 3 months and 4 years and 6 months. It came to be known as the ECCE year.

(Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) 2009)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2011) set out very clear guidelines for what constitutes early education, it states that early childhood education is one where the learning environment is visually stimulating and language rich, it fosters self-expression and language acquisition. It offers opportunities for supervised active play where children can exercise their coordination and motor skills while interacting with staff. The early years’ education-focused inspection (EYEIs) identifies play as a key indicator of process quality (Ring 2016:2)

In the last decade, there has been a shift in how we view early years in Ireland and there have been many positive developments. Wolfe and Hayes (2013) describe the shift in the use of language from one of welfare, supporting working mothers, to one of social investment with the policy reforms and the exchequer investment from the

late 1990s. This would be in line with UNESCO (2011) who are very clear that Programmes providing only childcare (supervision, nutrition and health) are not covered by early education. In 2016 Ireland introduced the EYEIs (DES 2016) where four areas of quality processes are inspected.

For the purpose of clarity, the term ‘early years’ education’ will be used to describe the sector who provide care and education programmes for children from birth to 6 in this study. Where and when the term ECCE appears, it will be when referring specifically to the Government funded free pre-school year.

1.1.2 The Early Years Education Professional

For those who work within the sector there is no agreed term for what they call themselves. Those who operate a Montessori curriculum call themselves Montessori teachers, whereas Montessori theory refers to them as directress, this is due to the nature of the learning, it is not obtained through lesson but rather through direction. (Montessori 1988). By accessing any of the job advertisements for example Early Childhood Ireland <https://www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/jobs/> (accessed 10th December 2016) the range of titles is vast and includes teacher, worker, educator, practitioner, assistant and leader. Yet these titles mean nothing outside of the sector (Urban 2016) OMNA (2000) identified titles based on levels of experience, from basic at level 1 to expert at level 5. For the purposes of clarity and consistency in this study those who work within early years’ education will be referred to as early years’ education professionals.

1.2 QUALITY

Quality in Early Childhood Care and Education is a much-debated issue. (Arnett (1998), Ishimine, Tayler, Bennett (2010)) The debates span from the definition of quality to the type of investment that is required if Ireland is to truly have a quality early years’ education system (Walsh 2016). The infrastructure for early years’ education provision is well established with capital funding available for the sector from the early noughties. Now there is more focus needed on the type of provision

within the newly built services, ensuring the early years' education workers are providing quality experiences for all children. This interest and investment has been demonstrated by the amendment of the 2016 Pre-school Regulations (Department of Health 2016), the Better Start Initiative launched Department of Children and Youth Affairs in 2015 (DCYA 2015 b) and the introduction of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) EYEI for the early years' education services providing ECCE (DES 2016).

There is a wide range of literature pertaining to early years' education including how to provide it and what constitutes quality in the early years' education services. (Melhuish 2004) Other countries have found themselves in a similar situation to Ireland, developing and ensuring quality early years education, as the early years' education becomes more visible and focus shifts to what is being delivered to the children by the early years' education professional. (Hayes 2008) There is need for investment not only in the form of capital grants for the infrastructure but for the quality of the experiences for the children in attendance provided through the environment and the early years' education professional.

Currently in Ireland there is no one national tool agreed that is available to gather a quality baseline of early years' education educational provision. The level of quality provision for early years' education services is an unknown quantity. (DCYA 2015 a) Currently statements about quality provision are made in relation to compliance with the 2016 Pre-School Regulations of the 2001 Childcare Act or from small scale studies such as Dwyer and McCormack (2014) and Neylon (2014) which both use the Infant and Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS) and Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) to identify a baseline to start their measurement. Eight of the agencies that support the development of the early years' education sector and in particular the development of quality provision have devised a quality programme for early years' education services (Duignan 2005), yet there is no national recognition for participation or a national award of achievement. Nationally there are two frameworks that have an impact on quality provision and experiences for children. The first one Síolta (CECDE 2006) is specifically for

quality in all areas of practice within all early years' education services, the second, Aistear (NCCA 2009) is for quality experiences through the early childhood curriculum framework. More recently while they remain separate, a tool of implementation has been designed taking the parts where the two documents overlap, this is the Aistear/Síolta Practice guide (NCCA 2016). This is a new development since this study began. The Aistear/Síolta Practice guide is a tool to support providers with practical quality solutions, it is accessible only as an online resource (www.ncca.ie/en/Practice-Guide). This allows for the resource to remain 'live' and have the most up-to date information at all times. It is also used by mentors supporting early years' education services to achieve a higher level of quality.

1.3 RATIONALE

The primary aim of the study was to support, develop and improve the quality of practice through the design and development of targeted interventions for the early years' education services and the professionals working within them. The data was collected by using both qualitative and quantitative methods to achieve robust data covering all variables in the delivery of quality. Practice in services was observed which provided the essential baseline for the study. The baseline along with supporting documentation and team input was used to inform the development of the bespoke interventions. For the purposes of comparison and authenticity in the study control groups were used. All services were observed for the baseline, however 50% received the interventions, while the remaining services did not. Within the sample the services were paired for comparison, this was to identify if any changes did happen post intervention they could be compared with services in the control grouping who did not receive any intervention. For example, one of the full day care services received intervention while the other full day care was part of the control and did not. To measure the impact the same rating scale was administered before and after the interventions, therefore permitting the scores to be compared. The retest was conducted on both control and intervention services. The intervention services

generally showed an improvement in the areas where an intervention was designed while the control groups in general remained static.

1.4 CONTEXT

When this study began (2012) the implementation of the quality agenda for the early years' education in Ireland was still in its infancy. The two national frameworks had been developed Síolta (Quality) and Aistear (Curriculum), regrettably neither were resourced for full implementation within the early years' education sector. Hayes (2008) identifies that it is what goes on in services that is the most important in terms of quality provision, yet Ireland still has no baseline to identify what action is needed to support quality and increase the level from the basic requirements of the Pre-school regulations to a Q mark in achieving Síolta.

This study's primary aim was to support early years' education professionals improve the quality of their practice by identifying their needs through a baseline, once the needs were identified the interventions were designed and developed.

1.5 THE RESULTS

The results indicated that services who received the targeted interventions achieved a higher score on the retest than the control services, who received only verbal feedback on their practice. All the services scored low for the delivery and availability of the daily activities. The results indicated that planning for activities for an educational focus was weak. In areas where services have been receiving inspections from the Health Service Executive (HSE) on their physical environment, and health and safety issues the services scored better. Overall there is an indication that services need targeted one to one support if they are to succeed in delivering quality educational experiences for the children in their care.

2 CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of a literature review according to Togerson (2012) is to review existing knowledge on a specific subject. This chapter will review the current literature in the areas pertaining to early years' education provision. It will be reviewed from a global to a national perspective.

Ireland's early years' educational landscape has changed dramatically over the last two decades and changes continues to happen. In this study quality, will be outlined in terms of what it is within an early years' education setting, there will also be a specific focus on developments in Ireland up to 2016.

2.2 EARLY YEARS EDUCATION A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

It may appear that early years' education provision and education presents as a new phenomenon in Ireland and that it is the only country to be developing a quality early years' education system. (Melhuish 2006) The fact is early childhood care and education has been around for quite some time, from when childhood started to be seen as a stage of life in its own right and not just one to service adults (Hayes 1999). The concept of the "Early Years Education" has been in existence throughout the world since about the 19th Century (Kamerman 2006). Early years education practice today is informed by many influential theorists across the science of humanities. From Freud's (1856-1939) studies of the development of personality to Bronfenbrenner's (1917-2005) ecological systems theory all impacting on the education and the development of the child. All activities found in the early years' education setting are derived from a theory of development which provide an enriched early years education environment, as children in all parts of the world mature and develop in roughly the same sequence (Sylva and Lunt 1982).

The provision of services historically was provided by private charities which shifted to a system embedded in public responsibility after World War II. According to Kameraman (2000; 2006) and Cochran (2011) the extent of these responsibilities varies across Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries as do the early childhood programmes they provide. The provision will depend on how the concept of early years' education is viewed and how this is prioritised in policy. For example, to provide care for children of working parents, encouragement of women into or to remain in the workforce, socialisation of children, preparing children for school, reduce the effects of child poverty or the socialisation of immigrant children and their parents. Another factor that impacted on early years' education development was the age of which children enter the primary school system. Table 1 - Average School Starting Age in OECD countries, shows the average age of children starting school. Ireland has the youngest average age with children starting at 4.5 years with Poland having the oldest at 7. It should be noted that this research was conducted prior to Ireland introducing a second free pre-school year for children aged 3 -5 Years. (DCYA 2015 c) Ring (2015) suggests that the young school starting age in Ireland is based on historical, socio-economic and political contexts, which prevailed at the establishment of the primary school system in 1831 (Centre for Early Childhood Research at Mary Immaculate College (CERAMIC) and Centre for Social and Educational Research (CSER) 2015). Kiernan and Walsh (2004) suggest it was due to state reluctant to get involved in family matters. Whatever the reason, our children are still going into the formal education system much younger than their European counterparts.

COUNTRY	AVERAGE AGE	COUNTRY	AVERAGE AGE
Australia	5.2	Japan	6
Austria	6.2	Korea	6.6

Belgium	5.9	Luxembourg	6.2
Canada	5.2	Mexico	6.1
Chile	6	Netherlands	6.1
Czech Republic	6.4	New Zealand	5.1
Denmark	6.6	Norway	5.8
Estonia	6.9	Poland	7
Finland	6.7	Portugal	5.9
France	5.9	Slovak Republic	6.3
Germany	6.2	Slovenia	6.2
Greece	6.3	Spain	5.8
Hungary	6.7	Sweden	6.8
Iceland	5.8	Switzerland	6.5
Ireland	4.5	Turkey	6.9
Israel	6.2	United Kingdom	5
Italy	5.9	United States	5.9
OECD average 6.1			

Table 1 Average School Starting Age in OECD Countries; Source OECD, PISA 2012 database.

Neugebauer (2007) completed a review on the trends around the world and concluded programmes exist for many different reasons. In Eastern Europe, Asian and African nations government intervention is provided with a focus on child health and child poverty. In Denmark, The Netherlands, Turkey and New Zealand there appears to be more focus on quality experiences and the professionalising of the early year's workforce. (Neugebauer 2007). Unlike other European countries, where the provision of early childhood care and education has been established for many decades, Ireland has only recently begun to focus specifically on children's pre-primary experiences (Ring 2015) In Ireland, England, Northern Ireland and the United States (U.S.) there is a clear policy distinction drawn between care and education. In Ireland, similar to

England and the US the majority of early years' provision is outside the primary school system. Early years is considered to be childcare and is regulated, as a health, safety and welfare, rather than education, service. While receiving some state support in certain circumstances it is mainly privately funded as either a 'for-profit' or 'not for profit' service. (Hayes 2007:8)

Across Europe most countries now provide an early years' place for all children through the establishment of a legal entitlement to the place or by making attendance compulsory. In some countries, the early years' educational place is available from birth, and in some like Ireland it becomes available when the child turns 3 years old. (European Commission 2014)

The United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the child in 1989 is seen as a key factor influencing current provision and practice in the early years' education for policy makers. There are 41 articles in total which are grouped together in four themes. **1) Survival Rights, 2) Development Rights, 3) Protection Rights and 4) Participation Rights.** While it is recognised that all themes cover areas that early years' education providers should be cognisant of in their practice, 'Development Rights' is of paramount importance as it is seen to impact on the delivery and development of early childhood care and education. In addition, these articles include the right to education, play, leisure, cultural activities, access to information, and freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This international agreement, secured the notion and recognised that for the first time, that not only was the child protected but their rights as individuals. Children were now being valued, and given a voice in matters that affected them and their own lives. (United Nations 1989).

2.3 EARLY YEARS EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT IN IRELAND

Surprisingly early years' education in Ireland can be tracked as far back as 1815, when the first school was established in Wicklow by JH Synge. In 1881 the first kindergarten was introduced in Dublin which was based on Frobel's theory of child

development. With the introduction of the Free-state there was a requirement for the re-establishment of the Irish Language, many of the teachers could not speak the Irish language and therefore lost their jobs. (Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) 1995) Little is reported in the literature about early years' education specifically after this point, as the new curriculum of 1934 for the primary sector is being established (INTO 1995) and children are entering the primary education system at age four, which was considered early education. (Ring 2015) The CSER (2006) report that service development for young children in Ireland was driven by the voluntary sector, and membership organisations, children who hailed from families who were deemed disadvantaged received supports from charitable organisations such as the Daughters of Charity and Barnardos. In the early 1990s the Irish landscape and the provision of early years' education began to change.

In 1991, The Department of Health and Children, Child Care Act 1991 was passed. In the Act, there was specific detail for the regulation of pre-schools and creating standards, focusing on their protection and welfare.

In 1992 Ireland signed up to the UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child. The ratification saw the establishment of children's advocacy groups advancing the rights of the child into the public consciousness (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) 2016). This was supported by a body of research available on the early years' education recognising the wide range of benefits from providing quality early childhood care and education programmes (Taguma et al. 2013)

The impact on the sector during the 1900's saw development, regulation and support of early years' education. This resulted in Early year's provision in Ireland exploding with unprecedented growth. This growth was due to the massive growth in the Irish economy coupled with European capital funding. (Hayes and Bradley 2006; National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi) 2005) The capital was available to support the building of an early years' education infrastructure, under the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000- 2006 (EOCP). This funding was followed by the National Childcare Investment Programme 2006-2010 (NCIP). The last two decades have seen

changes to the physical infrastructure, the legislation, and the introduction of two national frameworks for quality and curriculum in early education and provision. These developments occurred at the backdrop to the provision of financial supports for parents in the form of direct investment, through a universal free pre-school year, Early Childhood Care and Education scheme (ECCE) (DCYA 2009), Childcare Community Subvention (CCS) for parents in receipt of a social welfare payment and the Childcare Training Education Scheme (CETS) for parents on back to education initiatives. (DCYA 2012)

2.3.1 Infrastructure

Similar to the US and the UK, Ireland's early years' education provision was predominantly privately run where the service was offered for 3.5 hours per day over four or five days, these were known as pre-schools or playschools with the term sessional services used in the Pre-school Regulations (HSE 2016). Traditionally, these services operated out of converted front rooms or garages. Crèches or full day cares were mainly in large urban areas. It is estimated that 80% of those who needed full day care used childminders (Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform (DJELR)/Area Development Management (ADM) 2000) Hayes (2007) describes Ireland's approach to the delivery of early years' education services and the policy of successive governments as *laissez faire*. To review the development of the early years' education and provisions an expert working group on childcare was established. One of the key findings from their report was the need for improved childcare infrastructure "In recognition of the fact that the supply of childcare places is currently limited..." (DJELR 1999:58). The state invested in the infrastructure in the form of capital grants.

2.3.1.1 *Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP) 2000-2006*

In 2001 European structural funds were used to develop a more robust childcare infrastructure. This was possible under the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000-2006 which was managed by the Department of Justice Equality and Law

Reform. The main aim of this Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme was to develop the infrastructure for much needed childcare places. Affordable accessible childcare was identified as the biggest barrier for parents returning to or remaining in the workforce as the Irish economy boomed. (DJELR 1999). It was due to this barrier facing predominantly women that funding was secured under the umbrella of equality. The argument that working parents still require affordable accessible childcare remains high on the political agenda. Ireland is noted to have one of the highest childcare cost for parents that is particularly prohibitive for lone parents (OECD 2011).

Thus, the programme provided capital funding for both private and community early years' education providers, with the private providers accessing a maximum of €500,000 and the communities accessing a maximum grant of €1,000,000. (DJELR 2000) This was to ensure there were enough childcare places throughout the country. In addition, the community provider received a staffing grant to cover employment costs to keep their fees low and affordable. At this time, the number of early years' education places increased to 47,000 which was nearly double what had been available before (DJELR, ADM 2002). Experts within the sector believed that the quality of service needed to be developed in tandem with the actual buildings which were used for provision as there was minimal funding for this quality strand of the development. (CSER 2006)

2.3.1.2 *National Childcare Investment Plan (NCIP) 2006-2010*

In 2006 there was a significant development, for the first time in the history of the Irish State provision of early years' education was linked to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Office of the minister for children (OMC) 2006). This brought the development of a 'super' Ministry position which provided the minister with a seat at the cabinet table. This was further developed in 2011 with the establishment of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA). Prior to the establishment of this department eight Irish Government Departments had responsibility for Children.

Investment in the early years' sector increased the number of pre-school services and the number of childcare places becoming available increased by 65,000 over the period of the National Childcare Investment Programme (Office for the Minister of Children and Youth Affairs 2010). More recently the Free Pre-school Scheme 'ECCE' was introduced in January 2010 providing a universal free year of pre-school for children between 3 and 4 years (approximately) with a 95% take up rate. (DCYA 2011) For the first time ever in Ireland, all children have access to a pre-school place in the year prior to entering the primary school system.

2.3.2 Irish Policy

Hayes (1997) as quoted in Walsh (2016) stated that there was no national policy to co-ordinate early childhood services. These rapid developments were now required to be supported by policy, the first of which emerged from an educational perspective namely the 'Ready to Learn the White Paper on Early Childhood Education 1999 ((Department of Education and Science (DES) 1999). This was the first-time early education was introduced and included in a broad sense under the auspices of the Department of Education and Skills prior to this childcare or early years' education was under the Department of Health and its regulation through the 1991 Childcare Act, 1996 Pre-school Regulations (Department of Health 1996). This paper recommended the establishment of an Early Childhood Education Agency to oversee the implementation of the recommendations of the legislation. However, this agency failed to materialise and the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE) was established in its place. It began the work of developing a quality standard for Irish early years education services. It was the CECDE that produced 'Síolta the National Quality Framework for the early childhood education which was published in 2006. This was followed by, 'Aistear the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (2009) developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. More recently the Department of Education and Skills launched the 'Literacy and Numeracy for learning and Life' (2011).

After the first legislation for the sector the 1991 Child Care Act, (Pre-School) Regulations¹ (Department of Health and Children 1996) amendment were required and in 2006 the legislation was amended in line with sector development. It saw the introduction of '*Regulation 5 Health, welfare and development of the child*', this was a regulation that was developed with its own guidance notes on how to implement the regulation. This additional regulation provides for the examination of, for the first time, the Health, Welfare and the Development of the child, in the 2006 version the regulations examine the physical environment or data records of the service (Department of Health 1996). This regulation was a significant development for the early years' education sector as now the Pre-school inspectorate were assessing the quality of the care and education provision for the first time in early years' education services. (Department of Health 2006) Since then amendments have been made as knowledge grew and external legislation was deemed appropriate for early years' education services to comply with. The most recent version of the regulations is 2016 (Department of Health 2016).

The rapid growth in service provision and physical infrastructure highlighted the need for the promotion of quality services. For example, the 1998 Food Safety Act, impacted on the preparation of food in early years' education services. The implications of this stipulates that the food preparation area in early years' education service are now inspected to ensure they comply with the Act. As expected there was an increase in provision as individuals and communities were encouraged and supported to apply for capital grants. Ireland had a growing economy and needed parents to be part of the workforce. (DJELR 2004)

Historically in Ireland all children under the age of 18 and their needs were covered by nine different Government Departments. (Walsh 2016) In 2005 the Office of the Minister for Children was established. This was considered a Super Junior Ministry, not a department on its own, but a seat at cabinet for the minister. Usually Junior

¹ From this point forward will be known as the regulations.

Ministers do not have a seat at cabinet. This position expanded to include Young People, which became the Office of the Minister of Children and Youth Affairs. (OMCYA). Today it has a full Department and Minister, it also includes a staff team from the Department of Education co located within it the early year's policy unit (EYPU). In the 2006 there were two more significant developments, the amended Preschool regulations and the launch of Síolta – the quality framework.

2.3.3 The Development of Quality Measures

As Ireland historically viewed any service outside the primary system to be childcare it was regulated, as a health, safety and welfare, rather than education, service. This was all catered for under the pre-school regulations. However, as research grew in the area, it was the quality of the provision that was recognised as having a greater impact on the outcomes for the child. (Ishimine, Tayler and Bennett 2010) Mahony and Hayes (2006) identify that it has been internationally documented that the benefits of providing comprehensive and quality early education is twofold. It can have immediate results for the child's learning and well-being and also long-lasting results on the child's future. (Mahony and Hayes 2006:33) Early years' experiences establish key cognitive, physical and social emotion skills (Miller and Bogotova 2005:258)

2.3.3.1 The Childcare Act 2001 – The Preschool Regulations 2006 and 2016

The 1996 Regulations had been criticised for focusing on the physical environment and the health and safety of the child, with no inspection on what happens in an early years' education programme. The focus was too narrow with no access to the quality of the service being provided (O'Kane 2004). These issues have been addressed in the amended regulations of 2006 and 2016.

The regulations now examine the child adult relationships; the programme /curriculum; the child's learning and development and availability of sufficient resources to enable the child to interact with their peers. The regulations were

accompanied by its own measurement tool with inspectors being asked to make an assessment of the service based on a set of statements and mark them good, minimal or inadequate. For example, “Staff members provide regular, positive and meaningful interactions with the children in their care”. (Health Service Executive (HSE) 2006:29) In 2013 the inspection reports for early years education services became public and were made available on- line via the Pobal website <https://maps.pobal.ie/WebApps/TuslaInspectionReports/index.html> Prior to this it was a document only shared by the inspection team with the service in question.

Since the undertaking of this study a further amended version of the Pre-school Regulations has been published, Pre-school regulations (Department of Health and Children 2016) where the most noted inclusion is the one in relation to qualification. All those who work directly with the children must have the minimum Level 5 qualification in early years’ education.

2.3.3.2 *Síolta*

Síolta – The National Framework for Quality was written and launched by the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE) in 2006 and was the first Irish document to identify what quality should look like in an early years’ setting (DES 2006). It was designed as a tool to be used by early years’ education settings to help them with their quality agenda (Goodbody, 2011) The framework was a combination of principles, standards and components of quality for the early years’ education setting (DES/CECDE 2006). *Síolta* had no regularity role and participation on the process was voluntary. However, it was a new approach for early years’ education services as it guided and supported the. provider on their quality journey. The framework required services to meet the quality standard by achieving each of the components. Mentors were required to guide early years’ education professionals through the process, to assist them to achieve quality as opposed to them presenting as being compliant or not. A portfolio of evidence was compiled by the service for verification. Unfortunately to date there has been no national roll out of *Síolta* as it has never received funding nor been given appropriate resources.

THE COMPONENTS OF SÍOLTA	
Standard 1: Rights of the Child	Standard 9: Health and Welfare
Standard 2: Environments	Standard 10: Organisation
Standard 3: Parents and Families	Standard 11: Professional Practice
Standard 4: Consultation	Standard 12: Communication
Standard 5: Interactions	Standard 13: Transitions
Standard 6: Play	Standard 14: Identity and Belonging
Standard 7: Curriculum	Standard 15: Legislation and Regulation
Standard 8: Planning and Evaluation	Standard 16: Community Involvement

Table 2 The Components of Síolta The National Quality Frameworks (CECDE 2006)

2.3.3.3 Aistear

Aistear -The Early Childhood Curriculum framework was launched in 2009 (NCCA 2009). Similar to Síolta it was designed to guide and support providers. The overarching aim is for the service to achieve an all-encompassing curriculum. The Aistear framework has Themes, Aims and Goals where the early years' education professional can match learning outcomes and their daily activities to the goals. By providing activities that permit children to achieve each goal under each aim they achieve each of the themes.

AISTEAR'S THEMES AND AIMS			
WELL BEING	IDENTITY AND BELONGING	COMMUNICATING	EXPLORING AND THINKING
Aim 1 Children will be strong psychologically and socially.	Aim 1 Children will have strong self-identities and will feel respected and affirmed as unique individuals with their own life stories.	Aim 1 Children will use non-verbal communication skills.	Aim 1 Children will learn about and make sense of the world around them.
Aim 2 Children will be as healthy and fit as they can be.	Aim 2 Children will have a sense of group identity where links with their family and community are acknowledged and extended.	Aim 2 Children will use language.	Aim 2 Children will develop and use skills and strategies for observing, questioning, investigating, understanding, negotiating, and problem-solving, and come to see

			themselves as explorers and thinkers.
Aim 3 Children will be creative and spiritual. own	Aim 3 Children will be able to express their rights and show an understanding and regard for the identity, rights and views of others	Aim 3 Children will broaden their understanding of the world by making sense of experiences through language.	Aim 3 Children will explore ways to represent ideas, feelings, thoughts, objects, and actions through symbols.
Aim 4 Children will have positive outlooks on learning and on life.	Aim 4 Children will see themselves as capable learners.	Aim 4 Children will express themselves creatively and imaginatively	Aim 4 Children will have positive attitudes towards learning and develop dispositions like curiosity, playfulness, perseverance, confidence, resourcefulness, and risk-taking

Table 3 Aistear, the curriculum framework Themes and Aims (NCCA 2009)

Again, there was no national roll out and no resources provided. (DCYA 2013). Unfortunately for the sector after these development of the frameworks, Ireland went into recession and additional resources to support the implementation of the frameworks for service providers were not made available. However, while there is no national rollout there is some local provision from existing childcare support agencies (Pobal 2012)

During the process of this research there were ongoing developments in the early years' education including an early years' education strategy in 2013. This strategy 'Right from the Start' considered the child from pre-birth right up to the junior cycle in the primary school system. The recommendation for early years' education services is referred to as the pre-school quality agenda. It introduces a variety of measures including training and tighter sanctions for those services in breach of quality.

In 2014 a new initiative Better Start, a national early years' education quality development service, employed 50 early years' education specialists to work directly with services on the quality agenda. Better Start's main aim is to provide an integrated approach to developing quality in the Irish early years' education sector (Rogers 2014) To support this work the frameworks of Síolta and Aistear were combined into one practice guide. The guide is used by the specialists to mentor services who are preparing for the Síolta process. To-date there has been no review on the impact of this work. In 2016 there was an addition to the Better Start programme launched, the Access and Inclusion Model. This is a model of supports for the early years' education services and children with disabilities in their ECCE year, designed to ensure that children with disabilities can access their ECCE year. (DCYA 2016)

2.3.3.4 Quality Early Years Education Programmes

The definition of quality can mean so many different things (Department of Education and Skills (DES), CECDE 2005) while Moss and Pence (1994) state that the definition of quality historically was only truly known by a small number of stakeholders. The issue now is, how is quality defined for all stakeholders? This includes those whose role it is to deliver on the quality agenda and understand quality in a pragmatic way. Ireland has had its fair share of quality documents and quality initiatives developed locally or by a represented body. Some of the quality initiatives included as identified by Duignan (2005) in Table 4.

2001; Barnardos and Fas - Assuring Quality: Manual for Assessment of Community Employment Projects Providing Early Childhood Services
2002; National Children's Nurseries Association (NCNA) - Centre of Excellence Award
2002; IPPA - the Early Childhood Organisation - IPPA Quality Improvement Programme
2003; High/Scope Ireland - High/Scope Accreditation Pack, 2003
2003; St. Nicholas Montessori Society of Ireland - Certification Process for Montessori Schools.
2004; Border Counties Childcare Network (BCCN) - Quality Assurance Programme
2004; Childminding Ireland - Quality Indicators in Family based Day-care Ireland,

Table 4 Quality Initiatives available in Ireland. Duignan (2005)

According to Currie (2001) as quoted in Hall et al (2009) the notion of ‘quality’ is one commonly assumed to relate to the ‘structures’ and educative ‘processes’ that make up the provision. Most approaches to quality focus on the setting. At this level the measure of quality indicates what is typical for children in that setting. (Melhuish 2001:3). How services are run and what goes on very much impacts on the quality of the setting. To measure quality can be more challenging as it may be subjective. In Ireland, the setting is governed by the legislation the 2016 Pre-school Regulations (Department of Children 2006 and 2016) where the focus is on structures. Ring (2016) describes them as regulable features including personnel, their qualifications, the size of the groupings of children, the adult: child ratio, the formal curriculum and the physical environment of the centre. The programmes listed in *Table 4* identify that the structure is the basic requirement as it is the ‘processes’ that need to be reviewed and supported to improve the quality of the early years’ education service, however all include both and it is the process that has a ‘stronger association with child outcomes’ (Ring 2016:1)

2.4 MEASURING QUALITY

It is important that quality in the early years is measured as it is such a crucial time of development in a child’s life. CARE (2016) recognise that early years programmes can only reach their goal of promoting the development and well- being of children so that have equal chance and opportunity to contribute to society if they are assured or measured. Arnett (1989) identifies that focusing on the dimension of quality is what is important as it is these dimensions that influence the children’s experience in the early years’ education environment. The early years’ education environment has many influencing variables, from the physical layout of the room to those working within it.

2.4.1 The Early Years Education Professional

2.4.1.1 Qualifications

Training and qualifications have been to the forefront of the amendments of the legislative documentation since they were first published in 1996, with the recognition that they impact positively on quality practice. A number of research studies have highlighted that there is correlation between trained staff and the quality of the children's experiences. Rhodes and Hennessy (2000); Early and Winton (2001); Miller and Bogatova (2009) and Fukkink and Lont, (2007). That is, it is the responsibility of the adult in the room to provide for and facilitate the learning experiences, therefore the greater their qualification and understanding of practice the greater the quality of experience for the child. The quality of the service rises as a result of more meaningful experiences for the children. Children learn best in an environment where they have opportunity to play and communicate with children and adults who are familiar to them this combined with the child permitted to make their own choices and where the adult follows their lead. (Blau 2001)

Prompted by the RTE Prime Time Programme 'Breach of Trust'² which aired in May 2013, there were a number of significant announcements made in budget 2013 re a quality agenda for the pre-school sector including a new educational inspectorate for early years' education, a National Early years' education Support Service and Training Support to assist early years' education staff meet the new qualifications required under regulation. (Pobal 2014) A further positive development for the sector is the development of training and the level of qualification. Qualifications at level 7³ and higher in early years' education are becoming more a feature of third level prospectus's and available across Ireland for example courses are available in the following Universities and IT's, Dublin City University; NUI Galway; NUI Maynooth; Mary Immaculate College; Athlone IT; Blanchardstown IT; Carlow IT; Dundalk IT and Sligo IT.

The Pre-school /early years' education sector is predominantly a female populated profession with low status. (Walsh 2003) It is not possible to discuss the delivery of

² highlighting the lack of quality/ or regulation implementation in the early years' services.

³ Level 7 as identified on the National Qualifications Authority Ireland Framework

curriculum and the type of interactions without considering the quality agenda for the early years' education sector. Ireland has hosted conferences on quality in the early years' education where best practice was presented from across the globe. This has allowed informed debate as to how to define and measure quality in the early years' education setting, in the Irish context. Australia boasts to be the first country to develop a Quality Assurance System for the early year's sector Taylor (2004), they define quality as "positive outcomes for children's learning and development (Taylor 2004:255). Sylva et al. (2006) completed a study in the UK which identifies countries with different curricula and different expectations of a child profile at school entry. They believe that this may impact on the varying definitions of quality provision. This is an important aspect to consider within in the Irish context as of yet this perspective is unknown. Ireland has many different types of curricula offered but all must come under the Aistear early childhood curriculum framework, that is, the activities carried out in the early years' education setting must provide children with experiences that meet the aims and goals of the framework (NCCA 2009).

In the last decade, we have seen the shift in a thinking in the literature from trained staff being the key to quality early years' education provision, to concentrating more on the variables or the softer less tangible attributes that occur in settings. For example, the Adult; Child interactions and service culture. A number of authors Rhodes and Hennessy (2000); Early and Winton (2001); Miller and Bogatova (2009); and Fukkink and Lont (2007) highlight the hypotheses that a correlation exists between trained staff and the quality of the children's experiences. While research has identified the correlation between training and quality service they all recognise there is more to be considered. Early, et al. (2006) conclude after examining the academic gains within a pre-kindergarten setting.

It may be that having a Bachelor's degree will prove to be a necessary condition for attaining high quality, but education and credentials by themselves are not sufficient. Instead program administrators must institute measures to track quality in terms of what happens to children in the classrooms on a daily basis to ensure that these programs meet their goals... (Early, et al. 2006:193)

Sylva et al. (2006) conclude from their study that pre-school quality is significantly related to language development, cognitive process and social development. Hayes (2008) found that teaching practice in Irish junior infant classes continues to be insufficiently responsive to our current understanding of young children's learning. Pianta et al. (2006) propose that when measuring quality, it is not sufficient to only review the structural standards or the high level of qualifications alone, what happens to the children must be taken into account (Early et al. 2006). Importance is given to the relationships adults have with children. The research identifies that children tend to fare better when there is a supportive relationship within an organised environment Curby, Grimm, Pianta (2010); Burchinal, Howes, Pianta, Early, Clifford and Barbarin (2008).

Pugh (1992) cited in Douglas 2004 states the education and care of any child happens primarily through a set of unique relationships. Douglas (2004) in his paper which critiques the limitations of rating scales states the main criticism is that they do not take into account interpersonal relationships. He also criticises the objectivity of those doing the rating and how this can be an undocumented variable. Douglas (2004) reminds the reader there is more to quality of service than the domains that can easily be defined and aspects such as values and the service philosophy must be taken into account. Ring (2016) and Melhuish (2006) both identify that quality is made up of two equally important parts, the structural and the process aspects of the early years' education service.

2.4.1.2 Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Fullan (2006) state that introducing change without addressing the ability or capacity of an organisation to change is unrealistic yet over the last decade that is precisely what has happened to the early years' education sector in Ireland. Miller and Bogotova (2005) identify that educators of young children are being asked to promote high levels of achievement without preparing them appropriately. As the sector develops so too must those who work within in. So far the development has all been on one side with limited resources provided to those who work in the early

years sector and without whom the practical implementation that is required for quality experiences simply will not happen.

2.4.2 Quality, Practice and the Environment

As a sector in its professional infancy there are gaps in Irish research particularly on how all the developments have impacted on service delivery. As Aistear is the framework for early childhood curriculum and identifies interactions under the good practice guide this will be the tool used to support the proposed research. Aistear (NCCA 2009) was developed by the NCCA and has its foundations in four key research papers. Each paper had its own focus on an aspect of early childhood which impacts on daily experiences/activities and therefore on the content of a robust curriculum framework.

Aistear Research Papers
1. Perspectives on the relationship between education and care in early childhood (Hayes 2007)
2. Children's early learning and development (French 2007)
3. Play as a context for early learning and development (Kernan 2007)
4. Supporting children's early learning and development through formative assessment (Dunphy 2008).

Table 5 Aistear Research Papers NCCA (2009)

As previously stated, the sector has seen unprecedented growth originally in infrastructure and in the last three years' policy. While all the developments have been welcomed, unfortunately, research identifying the impact of these developments have had on the sector, the practitioners and the children is practically a green field site. Walsh (2003) identifies that while there are over 1,300 'research documents written between 1990 and 2003 'the vast majority of Irish research is one-off short-term evaluations of initiatives' Walsh (2003:16). For example, Hayes (2008) has reviewed teaching practices with 4 year olds, however this was between the primary school and the early years' education setting. There needs to be an evaluation of what is happening in the sector and what the impact is, have all these developments,

infrastructure, training and policy meant greater quality experiences for the children who attend early years' education services.

In 2010 the National Early Years Education Access Initiative (NEYAI) programme was announced and invited applications on quality based initiatives with a specific initiative for early years' education research focusing on quality issues, again while the research was valuable it was short –term. One of headings to which applications were invited was under mentoring (Pobal 2011), there were three successful projects under this heading, Aistear in Action, Profession Pedagogy and Addressing the gaps between theory and practice. (O'Dwyer and McCormack 2014) All projects have varying degrees of gathering a baseline and mentoring teams. The research reports indicate that there were significantly better ratings in the pre-school rooms where the interventions have been provided. Under the main findings of the reports it is stated that if quality is to be achieved the early years' education requires more than a competent practitioner, it requires a competent system with good governance structures. (O'Dwyer and McCormack 2015)

2.4.3 The Síolta/ Aistear Practice Guide

The Síolta/ Aistear Practice Guide is a combination of the two frameworks. Its purpose is to support early years' professions in using Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework and Síolta, The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education together to develop the quality of their curriculum (NCCA 2015).

2.5 SUMMARY

Bredekamp and Copple (2009) from the National Association of Education of Young Children also identify four core dimensions of classroom practices, they include, Curriculum, Teacher Participation, Assessment and Relationships. It is clear that the two systems value the interactions/ relationships between the adult and the child. Curby et al. (2010) take it a step further and identify the domains of interactions, "The

interactions that occur in classroom can be grouped into three domains; instructionally supportive interactions...organisational interactions...and emotionally supportive interactions (Curby et al. 2010:374)

Given the similarities between the views on what quality practice in early years' education should look like, one could assume that it is the variables that will have the impact on the research outcomes. Aistear and its guiding principles will be used for this research. While the 2015 National Guidelines provide a rating scale the tool will not be used to identify a baseline. Pianta (2008) has developed a tool based on observations to identify the interactions in the classroom, Classroom Assessment Scoring System, Pianta, La Paro and Hamre (2008). The use of the tool appears to have yielded the results required in the following studies, Curby et al. (2010), Burchinal et al. (2008), LoCasale-Crouch et al. (2007) and Early et al. (2006). "We measured classroom quality using two observation systems Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale –Revised (ECERS-R) and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). When used together their two measures complement one another and provide a very complete picture of classroom quality". (Early et al. 2008:182).

The primary aim of this research was to design, develop and generate specific interventions for the early years' education professionals with a view to supporting them to improve the quality of their practice. The Irish early years' education landscape is rapidly changing. In 2016 an additional inspection regime from the Department of Education and Skills was introduced to evaluate, range and appropriateness of the early educational experiences of children participating in the ECCE programmes (DES 2016), This action further substantiates Murphy's (2015) concern that the quality initiatives have tended to focus on the three to four year olds and that the under-threes have been neglected. With all the changes to national policy there was a deficiency in the literature on the impact of all these developments on early years' education in Ireland. In addition, the resources to accompany the developments in the early years' education sector has been sluggish. Two

frameworks were developed in the last decade without funding for full their implementation. (Goodbody 2011, Walsh 2016)

The literature clearly demonstrates the correlation between a qualified workforce. Early et al. (2007) states that it is more beneficial if the effectiveness of early childhood education is supported through a range of targeted range of professional development activities. Ryan and Goffin (2008) argue that more data is required to learn what early years' education professionals actually do. Hayes (2008) recommends that there should be a shift in the focus from implementing a prescribed curriculum to a focus on the interactive way children learn and develop.

This piece of research set out to conduct interventions that were targeted based on each participating service's need. These needs were identified by using a variety of tools namely the rating scales of ECERS and ITERS, supported with questionnaires and focus groups. The interventions were completed in partnership with each individual team. According to Fullan (2007) as cited in Howe and Jacobs (2013) change involves three dimensions (1) materials, (2) teaching approaches (3) beliefs and active involvement from the participants.

3 CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to identify if targeted interventions would impact on quality within early years' education settings. The primary aim of this study was to identify the level of provision in six early years' education settings in Ireland across a number of indices in order to facilitate the development, implementation and evaluation of a targeted programme for early years' education professionals in each of the settings with a view to supporting them in improving the quality of their practice.

A secondary aim was to gather baseline data in each of the six centres in an effort to fill the gap in the current literature on the quality of early years' education provision in Ireland.

A third aim was to examine the two key documents of Pre-school Inspection Reports and their Policies and Procedures for each of the six centres and compare them to the findings of the both the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) and Infant and Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS) in an effort to identify the current level of provision and practice in each of the six centres.

The study was conducted over three phases, phase one: gather a baseline, phase two: the interventions and finally phase three: the retest of the baseline. In this chapter, the methods applied for this research will be described including a rationale for their choice and how they were implemented.

3.1.1 Context of the study

Globally quality early years education is being prioritised with growing investment into services to provide rich learning experiences for children aged 0-6 years. The (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) 2015) noted that the main reason for this phenomenon was related to women returning to, or remaining in the workforce after they have started their families. However economic factors such as families requiring additional income and the growth of one parent families have also impacted on the current situation. In addition, there is growing recognition of the importance of early education impacting on long-term development, therefore developing environments to meet the needs of the child for their social emotional and cognitive development is central to quality service provision. (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) 2009)

Within the Irish context early education provision has undergone a major transformation over the last two decades which has impacted on both current policy and practice. Historically in Ireland the majority of preschool services were provided out of people's homes or renovated garages, while full day care facilities predominantly were in larger urban areas. (Department Justice Equality and Law

Reform (DJELR)1999) There was no legislative frame-work to govern the sector, and there was limited data on the number of services that existed from the membership organisation Irish Pre-school Playgroups Association which was established in 1969. (Centre for Social and Educational Research (CSER) /Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) 2006)

The current landscape is very different, the early years' education providers are regulated and inspected by a variety of departments and agencies. The existing legislative framework for early years' education provision primarily recognises that all children have a range of needs. In the first instance, the children must have their basic needs met, such as adequate shelter, food and water and this is supported by a range of regulations (Department of Health and Children 2016). Children's developmental needs are met through a variety of activities that should stimulate and encourage growth in all areas such as physical, emotional and cognitive (Department Health and Children 2016).

Notwithstanding the many positive advancements over the last two decades there remains no national baseline data on the quality of early years' education provision in Ireland. While some information exists in Pre-school Inspectors reports on compliance for Regulation 5: Child Health Welfare and Development (contained in the 2006 Pre-school Regulations of the 2006 Child Care Act), this information has never been disseminated or published in a report. Hanafin (2014) acknowledges that the assessment of Regulation 5 is complex, involves multiple areas of wellbeing health and development and generates extensive commentary in reports. She suggests that this information cannot give a clear view of what is being assessed or of the information collected.

Currently the only data that is published nationally in relation to quality is on qualifications. This is gathered and collated by an organisation called Pobal who manage funding on behalf of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) and is collected annual in their beneficiary survey. This is a survey of the early year's providers who are in receipt of funding. Pobal's 2014 report identifies that 87% of

early years' education professionals have a minimum Further Education Training Awards Council (FETAC) level 5 or higher qualification in early education. (Pobal 2015). The Early Years Education Strategy recognises that advancements in the quality of provision can only be progressed when a baseline on quality data is obtained. Specifically, the Strategy recommends that the baseline should be completed using a sample of early years' education services rather than including all service providers (DCYA 2013). Despite the provision for the commencement of an annual audit of early years' education in the budget for 2016, there have been no further developments in this regard.

It therefore can be argued, without a baseline on quality there is no way to know what or if any of the developments over the last decade have had any impact on quality provision. Data held on early years' education is limited and 10 years after Siolta's publication there is no national roll out. (Goodbody 2011) To fit an existing early years' education sector Ireland developed frameworks in which current programmes could be included in. frameworks, "a new beginning in harmonising processes across the preschool and primary school sectors" (Moloney 2011:71). The framework format allows services to review their own practice and decide if they are achieving the quality component outlined. To demonstrate that they are meeting the component the provider must show evidence of the practice. From a practice, practical and scientific point of view this type of measurement is not a clear indication for the provider of where their gaps in provision are. The process in its current form is effectively impartial for example, it may be difficult for practitioners to decide what practice needs to change and why without baseline data. The work carried out is not needs-lead as no gaps have been identified, the provider works through components providing evidence as they go. This can be confusing for providers (Meath County Childcare Committee unpublished). New concepts or legislation can be introduced for the sector without any training. In addition, regulations have been introduced without any training for, or input from the providers. For example, in 2016, a pilot process of inspection was conducted in the early years' sector. However, the findings did not inform a proposed continuous professional development framework for early years' education professionals.

This study was designed to review the impact of an intervention programme on quality provision in early years' education settings. The review was achieved by observing practice in six early years' education settings and obtaining a baseline of current practice. Six centres were randomly assigned to either a control (N=3) or intervention group. (N=3). To determine the baseline score, internationally recognised rating scales for the early years' education environment were used. These were the Infant/Toddler Environment rating scale and the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ITERS and ECERS) (Harms, Clifford and Cryer 2006). The scores observed from these rating scales employed for the study were used to inform the development of targeted interventions and to measure the impact on the learning environment in the early year's settings. The centres assigned to the control group received feedback on their baseline scores and were again tested within the same timeframe as the intervention group.

The interventions were developed through a collaborative process with the participants. Part of this process was to agree focused interventions which were developed from the gaps in the provision identified through the scores observed on the ITERS/ECERS. The interventions were a series of one and half hour information sessions on specific topics and targeted at an appropriate learning level for the participants which resulted in creating a targeted approach to the needs of the individual services.

To capture quality provision across each of the settings, an analysis was conducted using both the most recent pre-school inspection report and the policies and procedures from each of the early years' education services.

Questionnaires and focus groups were conducted in an effort to gain a broader and in-depth understanding of the issues pertaining to the early years' education practitioners and what may ultimately impact and inform their practice (Cohen et al. 2007)

3.1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to determine the current levels of the quality of provision in six early years' education settings in Ireland in order to design implement and evaluate specific interventions to improve the quality using the rating scales of ECERS and ITERS. The areas of quality are identified in their seven sub-scales. (1) Space and Furnishings, (2) Personal Care Routines, (3) Language and Reasoning/Talking, (4) Activities, (5) Interactions, (6) Programme Structure and (7) Parents and Staff. The author proposes, if the adult's behaviour changed following the interventions is it possible to change people's behaviour by providing specific relevant new information.

3.1.3 Aims of the Study

The research was designed and implemented over three stages as illustrated in Table 6: Stages of research

Stages of Research	
Stage One	
1.	Questionnaire
2.	Baseline data of provision
	Document analysis
4	Focus Groups
Stage Two	
5	Design interventions based on findings from stage one
6	Implementation of the interventions
Stage Three	
7	Evaluation of the interventions

Table 6 Stages of the research

3.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Bassey as cited in Briggs and Coleman (2007) describes research as systematic, critical and self -critical enquiry which aims to contribute towards the advancement

of knowledge and wisdom. Searching for the truth/answers places a certain amount of responsibility on those who carry out research in any field of study.

Therefore, research in its simplest terms is an organised way of gathering and collecting information. This information is used to assist understanding and/or advance knowledge in a chosen topic to resolve or answer a question. (Flick 2006).

In a similar way, this study will collect data in an organised way. This will permit an understanding of quality and how it might be improved in the hope that it can contribute towards the advancement of knowledge and insight for developing quality practice in the early years' education. The outcomes from this research may provide guidance to early years' education practitioners who seek to support quality development in the early years' education.

Nation (1997) argues that while using a prescribed method may seem to impose unnecessary rules, it is these rules that give the research its authenticity. Therefore, it is important to follow blue prints; traditions or philosophies that have been designed by those who have worked before on the research quest. The single most important factor of using these traditions is perhaps to give the study validity and reliability. These traditions have stood up to scrutiny to confirm constancy, they allow for retesting and for others to create the same environment. Using a methodological framework and applying rigor may seem like an onerous task for any researcher, yet these are the aspects of the research that provide the methodology with its validity.

The use of a methodological framework demonstrates that the application of the research followed sound methods and was meticulous in its testing. A key factor in any good research is its reliability and its validity as it provides credibility (Flick 2006). In science, it is not good enough to observe something or rely on personal experience to understanding the phenomena as this is only the individual's world view and how they see the world and themselves in it (Mark 1996; Nation 1997). The test must stand up to scrutiny for example, Nation 1997 states that it is not enough to see that something can be repeated and therefore verifiable by consensus,

it must have a structure, and this structure is available through the framework of a scientific method.

Researchers too hold world views or paradigms as they can be referred to in research. Paradigms/World views are the ways in which phenomenon are viewed. Different paradigms/worldviews have their own preferred methods and theories. (Creswell 2003). To apply a scientific method to find the truth the individual must remove their own bias and remain separate from the phenomenon that they are studying. (Creswell 2003) A sound structure is required to allow the questions of how and why to be reliably answered. To combat personal opinion a structure is required, this can be referred to as the framework of scientific method. A structure will allow for the theory to be tested again with a similar outcome. (Nation 1997).

Briggs and Coleman (2007) state that world views or paradigms assume that the researcher draws implicitly or explicitly upon a set of beliefs or epistemological assumptions. The researcher starts a study with their assumptions on it, how and what they are going to discover or learn. Therefore, the claims must be made in relation to empirical settings or the local space in which the research is operating. This permits the introduction and description of the theory explaining why the research problem under study exists. (Creswell 2003).

Briggs and Coleman believe that as a researcher will bring his/her own world view to a study including what they perceive the reality of the situation to be. They believe this view will determine and influence how someone will go about their research. These world views according to Creswell (2014) are the four philosophical worldviews of Postpositivism, Constructivism, Advocacy/Participatory and Pragmatic view. Each view brings its own method for the application of the theory and impact on how data is gathered.

Postpositivism which was the natural progression from positivism was concerned with studying everything in a scientific way, applying mathematical methods for data collection and understanding. The main issue with positivism is that the world does not happen in a laboratory and the scientific application of methods does not address

how we are experiencing the world; it is almost like it is abstract from what we do. (Crotty 2006) Creswell recognises this concept and takes the research into the real world, and suggest that it is not possible to be positive about claims when studying humans.

Constructivism is derived from the perspective where the researcher wants to understand the world where they live and work. (Creswell 2004). They are seeking the meaning of things and approach their research from a broad perspective to include all views. Rather than starting with a theory the researcher generates the theory asking people their views on phenomena. This can result in people becoming submerged in a view and consequently adopt it as the knowledge. The research is constructed through engagement with it rather than it being the reality.

Advocacy/Participatory is set in the belief that is about action, and action will deliver reform. It has been generally applied when researching issues that are pertinent to marginalised groups, where they are seen to be vital to the study. The role of the researcher is to provide a voice for specific groups of people. This is especially true if they are seeking action/change for their participants. It is usually interlinked with a political or human rights agenda (Creswell 2004). Creswell (2004) is of the opinion that under the pragmatic worldview, researchers should look at the problem, use all research methods required that will assist in understanding the problem. Identifying solutions that work is the key not the methods used in identifying it.

Overall it is better to use paradigms to structure a study. They give a clear framework in gathering the data, which contributes to the validity by using reliable methods. However, it should be noted that paradigms may blinker the researcher in other valid ways of answering questions. Having considered the four options, as identified by Creswell (2003) of Constructivism, Advocacy Pragmatism and Post Positivism for a research framework, this research study will be conducted within the framework of a Postpositivism paradigm. The overarching view of Postpositivism is cause and effect. According to Creswell (2004) Post Positivists hold the deterministic philosophy that, the causes determine the effects on the outcomes.

Creswell (2003) states that through the Postpositivism approach the knowledge of the subject develops through careful observation and measurement of the objective. For example, in this study valid rating scales ECERS and ITES were employed to carry out the observations in order to measure the level of quality in six early years' education settings

The information for this study was gathered using both quantitative and qualitative methods. By using both methods to gather the data, the quantitative gives the numerical data and the qualitative data give it its meaning. (Creswell 2003). The rating scale ECERS and ITES used during observation gathered the quantitative data and used it to inform the interventions. The qualitative data was used to provide context and a distinctiveness in order to make the interventions service specific. The study was interested in assessing the current level of quality care being provided, designing interventions focused on the areas identified for improvement and assessing the impact of the interventions on the quality of the service. That is, it was hypothesized that if targeted interventions were developed in relation to the baseline data obtained would the interventions have an impact on the early years' education practitioners behaviour. This is supported by the basic principles of behaviour modification which according to Kazdin (2001) in order to be achieved there must be an assessment, an intervention and an evaluation in order to provide for an alteration in the behaviour. For example, in this study the assessment was the baseline and the intervention were the bespoke workshops designed and finally the evaluation was completed in the form of a retest. Ultimately this study examined behaviours by specifically designing interventions that were based on actual information in a number of areas identified from the baseline data. Kazdin (2001) believes that one of the most efficient ways to determine if a new method will work is the research tool of the experiment.

3.2.1 Experimental Design

According to Christensen (2001) experimental research attempts to identify cause and effect by conducting controlled experiments. Kirk (2013) describes experiments as a

plan for assigning subjects to the specific conditions and the analysis of it. The objective of an experimental design as described by Johnston and Pennypacker (2009) is to determine the effects on the respondents of the experiment compared with the effects on the respondents of the control group. They view experimental designs as a way of arranging control and experimental conditions. This permits comparisons which help to isolate the effects of the independent variable on the dependant variable. For example, by having one larger group of similar people divided into two smaller groups, and by exposing just one of the smaller groups to specific conditions or an intervention and not the other group then upon completion of the intervention the two smaller groups are analysed and compared to see if there was any change or difference between the two groups following the intervention. Cohen et al. (2007) and Creswell (2003) hold a similar view by describing the essential features of experimental research as the relationship of control and the manipulation of conditions, by introducing an intervention to one group where the conditions have been manipulated and measure the difference with the control group. The approach of experimental design was adopted for this study. It is a study about discovering if the interventions provided have an effect on the quality of provision in early years' education settings.

Experimental design is based on the observation of relationships and the manipulation of situations, by changing or influencing the variables. (Johnston and Pennypacker 2009) This is true of this study as the baseline is gathered by using observations and the interventions designed to manipulate the variables, that is the elements of behaviour that has been targeted for improvement or change. The variables are the measurable characteristics or attributes of the phenomena being studied, the research is then usually looking for the relationship that exists between them. The dependent variable is the one that is to be manipulated, while the independent variables are the influencing factors that can impact on the dependent variable. This study is concerned with a number of variables which include, the early years' education professionals, the parents, the services culture, the classroom environment and the programme planning, Figure:1 Independent and Dependent Variables adapts Kgaile and Morrison's 2006 diagram of Independent and Dependent variables for illustration purposes for this research. In this study the quality of the provision is the dependent variable which may

or may not be manipulated, the others are the independent variables which may change and it is there change that will impact on the overall quality provision



Figure:1 Independent and Dependent Variables

Christensen (2001) states that in order to have a true research design in experimental research there must be the inclusion of a control group. He argues that a control group is required for effecting control to give the research internal validity. Experimental designs with control and experimental individuals/groups facilitate these comparisons which help to isolate the effects on the dependent variable.

This allows the research to be in a position to say if there was an effect on the dependent variable following the manipulation/interventions. In order to make the comparison on the dependent variable this research needed a control group and intervention group. This research set out to identify if there was an effect following the manipulation of the variable that is quality provision, or would the variable have been effected without the intervention, i.e. if the services participating just received

information on the areas they needed to address to improve quality practice as identified in the baseline results, would this be sufficient to effect practice.

Like any research design experimental design has strengths and weakness, but it is through the recognition of these that one determines what is the best method to test the hypotheses. One of the main advantages of experimental design is the ability to manipulate variables. This research intends to manipulate the quality of provision in six early years' education services thus meeting the criteria as outlined by Kirk (2013) as the research involves the manipulation of one or more variables to determine the effect.

According to Cohen et al. (2007) under the experimental umbrella there are variations to the design for example, controlled experiment, field or quasi experiment and a natural experiment. A controlled experiment is where all aspects of the experiment are controlled, this type of design usually takes place under laboratory conditions. The second type is the quasi-experiment where the experiment takes place in the field, this is used when the subjects to be studied cannot be brought into laboratory conditions. This is true of this study, it would not have been possible to take all six services in to a laboratory and control every aspect of their lives for the duration of the experiment. The third type is referred to as a natural experiment where it is not possible to isolate and control variables.

Kirk (2013) Creswell (2012) suggest that sometimes in education research there is the need to use intact groups. An intact group is where you take the group as they are, they come to the research as a group therefore remaining intact. This selection of groups was adopted in this study. There were two reasons for using the intact groups a) the service was being reviewed as a whole entity, it was the cause and effect in each service and b) to rule out some of nuisance variables, services were matched for comparison. According to Cohen et al. (2007), Creswell (2012) and Nick (2013) matched paired design or 'subject matching' is the matching of services/participants based on the variables that are considered important for the study and which may influence the outcome. In the early years' education settings Pianta (2005) identifies

the variables as, the programme, the classroom, the teacher, and has stated that very few large-scale studies have examined the same categories of predictors of classroom quality. The study would have the baseline but wanted to reduce the number of variables that impacted, it was felt this would give greater validity to the study as the comparison was like with like.

Services with their intact groups were selected. They were matched by category and ownership/management. The grouping where the one owner owned the two services, one was in the control group and the other in the intervention grouping. The purpose for this was a) to reduce variables where possible and b) to match like with like as the provision in a baby/toddler room is different to that in an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) room.

As the services to be compared had the same governing documents such as operations policies and procedures the variables in as far as possible were reduced.

3.2.1 Sampling

A sample is a sub set of the population (Leedy and Ormrod 2013) or in the case of this study it is a sub section of early years' education providers. The purpose of sampling is to gain information about the general by just examining a part, as it may be difficult to have research that involves all relevant participants. Creswell (2003) states that it is important to specify the characteristics of the population and then the sampling procedure. It is important that the sample chosen is reflects early years' education in Ireland as a whole and not just one section. (Nation 1997) In this study the population is the early years' education providers.

Christensen (2001) claims that when the research questions require a representation of the general population a random sampling technique should be applied. There are many methods/procedures that may be applied when choosing a sample. The choice will depend on what the researcher wants to know and if the profile of the participants needs to be reflected. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2013) a sample needs to be

carefully chosen so that the characteristics of the total population should be captured, that is if you were to include the entire population the results would be the same.

A random sample is one where according to Nation (1997) there is an adequate representation of the whole population and that everyone has an equal chance of being selected. Researchers apply mathematical equations to select participants. However, where a researcher is looking for specific traits, a random sample will not produce the necessary data as not all respondents will be living close to a railway track. Creswell (2012) describes a sample taken from a targeted population as 'probability sampling'. Within the probability sample there is then the option to do a simple random sample where the participants get selected to reflect early years' education in Ireland. The method of selection applies a number to each participant and then randomly selecting them. This provides the researcher with a random sample from their targeted population. While other methods of sampling were considered, the random sample was the method chosen for this study as it best met the needs for selection.

The other methods for selecting samples reviewed included, systematic sampling and according to Creswell (2012) this method can be more convenient than a random sample as you are not numbering your sample but rather taking a percentage of them. Leedy and Ormrod (2013) describe it as selecting individuals using a system, they have clustered the population to ensure representation and then select a certain amount of the clusters.

Another method of sampling is nonprobability sampling according to Leedy and Ormrod (2013) and Creswell (2013). This is where researchers have no way of establishing or securing that each element of the population will be represented. For example, you provide a service and you want to get the opinions of your customers, then your sample will depend on who arrives on your chosen day and this is sufficient for what you want to know. Quota sampling is similar as in you may ensure that of the customers who come in on a given day that there are equal men and women surveyed. (Leedy and Ormrod 2013). As this research was not concerned with the general population but rather the Irish early year's sector neither of the above two options of sampling were appropriate.

Creswell (2003) describes a convenience sample as one of using naturally formed groups. This is the case in the early years' education, as the service and the team were being observed as a complete unit. The research depended on the participation of services and their willingness to attend the interventions.

The types of provision included, as defined by the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform (2004), were "sessional" offering education programmes for up to three and half hours per day and "Full day care (FDC)" offering care and education programmes for over five hours per day. In Ireland, early years' education provision is offered from both private and community operators. There are just over 4,000 of these early years' education services in Ireland as it was not feasible to invite all 4,000 services to participate, a sample from each of the types of provision available in Ireland was chosen. According to Nation (1997) one of the main advantage to samples is that you have a portion of the population making the research manageable.

For the purpose of this study an equal number of participants from each type of service was included. The selection of the sample in this study permitted representation of the whole early years' education sector with two services from the full day care, two from sessional and two that are community run. Once the type of provision was decided a second criterion for selection was that the service operated in more than one location. This was done to permit the control group to operate in an identical way as possible due to the intervention group. This was to reduce the number of variables as both services (control and non-control) operate under the same approach. In each of the three areas Sessional, FDC and Community two services were selected to participate. This would assist in the validity of the results as the services has very similar variables so the comparison was fair, comparing like with like. The research has a good sample of the views of the Irish early years' education sector.

In selecting the sample, the assistance of the County/City Childcare Committees was sought to identify services in their area who would meet the criteria. The only criterion was that services need to be operating one or more early years' education services and be willing to engage in the process. One of each type of service was sought. A letter was sent to 22 services who operated more than one service in a 50-mile radius

requesting them to forward an expression of interest. Ten services responded where a presentation was delivered to them outlining the involvement and the commitment that would be required. Following the presentation six services signed up to be participants. The reasons cited for non- participation was the extra time commitment of the interventions. Table 7 provides a profile of the six services who initially agreed to participate on the study.

TYPE OF SERVICE	Sessional	Full Day Care Private	Full Day Care Community
OPENING HOURS	Less than 3.5 hours per day/ 5 days per week	More than 5hrs per day /5 days per week.	More than 5hrs per day /5 days per week.
MANAGEMENT	Owner/ Manager	Owner/Manager	Board of Management
FUNDING	Privately owned Parental Fees ECCE	Privately owned Parental Fees ECCE TEC	Purpose build with grant Parental fees ECCE ⁴ TEC ⁵ CC ⁶ S
NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING N=6	Two Services One control One with Interventions	Two Services One control One with Interventions	Two Services One control One with Interventions

Table 7 Profile of the six participating services

Once the services agreed to participate each participant was asked to sign a letter of informed consent. This included the plain language statement asking them to confirm that they were over 18 and an acknowledgment that the participants that their participation was voluntary and they had the right to withdraw at any time without consequence see Appendix VI *Invitation to participate*. Upon completion of the overall study there were 31 participants across five centres. One of the community facilities which was set to receive the interventions withdrew from the study citing work load and personal commitments as their reason for leaving, they did permit the

⁴ ECCE – Early Childhood Care and Education

⁵ TEC – Training and Education Childcare

⁶ CCS – Community Childcare Subvention

use of any data gathered to that point. Of the 31 participants 16 were located in the three 'control' centres.

- *Participant Profile*

The participants (n= 31) were all female with a mean age of 38 years. 70% of the participants had a FETAC level 5 in childcare, with 3% having an early year's degree. 67% had children with the majority of 47% having adult children. Of the sample 60% described themselves as being in fulltime employment with 92% of the respondents earning less than €30,000 per year. The average years of service with their current employer is just over five years.

3.2.2 Qualitative and Quantitative

When identifying tools to be used to gather data there are two main types of approaches taken Qualitative and Quantitative. (Bogan and Biklen 1992) These are research strategies or methods used for the collection process within the research framework. The framework that the researcher has chosen to work within will determine which method/s are used. When studying any phenomenon, the method chosen will also determine how the results will be analysed, measured and presented. For example, a researcher coming from a Postpositivism position/view will use quantitative methods, the data is usually presented in the format of statistics or numbers. Whereas someone coming from a constructivist framework will favour qualitative methods. There is also a third option of 'mixed methods' where both types of data collection strategies are used to provide a more robust analysis. (Creswell 2003)

3.2.3 The Qualitative Approach

The qualitative approach uses methods that gather data based on human judgement and are usually carried out by a researcher taking a constructivist world view. The researcher values the input and the views of the participants. Qualitative researchers are interested more in the perceptions of reality and open to the idea that people view

the same thing differently (Mosses and Knutsen 2007). These methods are usually used to achieve a deeper understanding of another person's point of view. Qualitative data is used in approaches such as Case studies and Action Research. In the incidence of the case study all elements of a phenomena are studied. This according to McGloin (2008) provide the research with both greater width and depth through as the case study is a more intensive enquiry. Researchers applying these methods assume there is no single reality, rather the nature of reality is defined by the interaction of the researcher with the phenomenon being studied (Mark 1999). Creswell (1994) describes qualitative data measurement as one applied in the social sciences as it builds a picture with words to resolve a social or human problem. There are different methods used to gather the data, traditionally these would include interviews, observations and focus groups where participants are asked open questions i.e. not yes/no answers, so they may give their own opinion on the phenomena. The researcher will then interpret that data by a variety of means including rigorous analytical tools, the analysis requires reflective thinking. Trends and themes are presented from the analysis.

3.2.4 The Quantitative Approach

Quantitative data is about the numeric collection of data. To know how many of something or how larger or small something is. This type of approach is useful for mathematical and statistical analysis. For researchers, the quantitative approach assumes that there is a single objective reality. They adopt an approach using standard research methods to study a particular problem and arrive at the same conclusion. According to Mark (2006) the researcher must remain separate from the research to avoid any bias. Perhaps the most frequently used methods under quantitative is a survey. A survey asks questions that are closed, that is the answer is not based in opinion, the results provide a numeric description of the trends, the attitudes or the opinions of the population. Experiments which also come under the quantitative method which test the impact of a treatment on a variable, using controlled environments or factors. (Creswell 2003)

Choice about the method applied will be influenced by the research and what is to measure. According to McGregor and Murane (2010) often the quantitative measurements of what, where and when are associated with positivism while qualitative (the interpretation of the why and how of human behaviour) is associated with post-positivism. However, they themselves recognise that this is not always the case and research is not always something that can be easily identifiable as one or the other. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) argue that the qualitative data approach will have patterns while the quantitative research approach makes a guess, or forms a hypothesis which is then used to test the data.

3.2.5 The Approach in this Study

In this study the methods used were predominantly quantitative, they include the document analysis, and the observation. The only qualitative method used was the focus group. The final method used in this study was the questionnaire, this was designed with both open and closed type questions. The reason for using both methods was to assist with the why and to give the interventions more depth, to know the participants and the influences around them, they could not have been taken in isolation of their environment. This was similar to doing a class profile at the start of an academic year to yield valuable data that is in the hidden curriculum. (Kohlberg 1983) No one method of collection was going to provide all the information required on the variables therefore both quantitative and qualitative methods were used.

Flick (2006) identifies Bryman's eleven ways of integrating quantitative and qualitative research. Firstly, he identifies triangulation by checking one set of results against the other by doing this they both can support each other in the findings. Combining both provides a more general picture. This study was going to benefit from the qualitative findings facilitating the interpretation of relationships between variables in quantitative data sets.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

A number of instrument were used to collect the data required for this study. The following gives an overview of how the data was collected followed by the rationale for selection within this study.

- Document analysis. The request for specific documents went out to the services prior to the observations. They were collected when an agreement for the time of the observations was being discussed or upon completion of the first day's observations.
- Questionnaires. These were delivered by hand in a return envelope and then collected by hand when the researcher was in the service. One manager collected them all and dropped them to the researcher. Each had received an envelope in which to return them.
- Focus groups, the data was recorded on recording devices during the session, the researcher took some notes in addition to this.
- Rating Scales. These were carried out during the observation. The service received a preliminary score that was confirmed it should be noted that, before scoring the observation the additional questions of the scale were asked. This was repeated for the post-test rating.
- Intervention Evaluation, was carried out at the end of each of the interventions

3.3.1 The Questionnaire

The purpose of questionnaires according to Cohen et al. (2007) is to gather data with a specific aim in mind. McNiff et al. (2006) state the reason for choosing questionnaires is to find out basic information that cannot be ascertained otherwise. Wilson and McLean (1994) as cited in Briggs and Coleman (2007) claim that the questionnaire is a useful tool in gathering information. Cohen et al. (2007) like Coleman agree they are useful but stating the reason for this is that questionnaires can provide structural and numerical data and that it is the researcher who is in control as they decide what kind of questionnaire it will be.

Questionnaires can take on different approaches either open or closed questions. For a more structured approach closed questions would be used. This type of questionnaire is useful when gathering data from larger groups as it permits trends or patterns to be observed or recorded. Cohen et al. (2007) Creswell (2012) identifies closed questions as being practical for any researcher as they solicited a certain amount of responses to the one question. This can be achieved by providing options for the participant. For example, which colour do you like best? A) Red B) Blue C) Yellow. In this type of question, the researcher is prescribing the answer. (Cohen et al. 2007). The other type of questions are open ended questions where the response is not provided for example, what is your favourite colour? (Creswell 2012). Creswell (2012) identifies a third option and that is semi-closed-ended questions which has the advantage of both open and closed as it asks a closed question followed by a request for additional information. For example, the participant may be asked why they chose the option or asked for their comment. According to Denscombe (2003) a questionnaire respondent should only be asked questions they would have the answer to, i.e. their own opinion from their experience. Questionnaires are not a test, but as described in the paragraph above they are a way to ascertain information.

As part of the information gathering for this research a questionnaire was administered at the start of the research process. The main aim of the questionnaire was to explore the views of the early years' education professionals that would contextualise the information provided in the rating scale. The questions were formulated in such a way as to gain greater insight into the individual professionals working within the early years' education services. The information sought had three main aims;

- a) to compare the sample to trends nationally about the sector,
- b) to give context to the baseline and assist in researcher in the design of the interventions,
- c) to get their opinion on their practice, quality and their opinion of the early years' education sector and themselves as professionals.

Every effort was made to make the questions as accessible as possible. To gain full knowledge from the participants both open and closed questions were used. Creswell (2012) sees the advantage to this method in a questionnaire as it permits the responses

from the predetermined closed question and then explores the reason why. For example, this is a question in relation to planning activities in their service. The closed question will assist the researcher in identifying if the service plans and if they do not what the reason is under the open question. Then it asks for their own opinion on planning, see Table 8 Sample for Questionnaire Open and Closed Questions.

Do you stick to the plan	YES		NO	
If no, please explain why				
Do you think planning is important	YES		NO	
Please state the reason for your answer				

Table 8 Sample from Questionnaire of Open and Closed questions

According to Johnson and Turner (2003) the researcher used an ‘intramethod mixing’ method by using both open and closed questions.

Closed questions are useful to gather data fast and easy. (Cohen et al. 2007) The closed questions for this research were formatted into statements with a tick boxes for response. For example, see Table 9 Closed questions sample from questionnaire, below.

Do you feel valued as a childcare professional by; (please tick all that apply)

Yourself		Your Family		Your Friends	
Your Employer		The Parents		Society in General	

Table 9 Sample from questionnaire of closed questions

Table 9 Closed questions sample from questionnaire

The questionnaire see Appendix XIII – *The Questionnaire*, comprised of 12 sections. The function of the questionnaire was to gather data on each of the participants working in the service. The first section was concerned with building a profile so questions on their age, their gender, their income etc. The questionnaire then moved on to the semi-open questions, asking a closed question and a rationale for their answer, similar to the example above (Creswell 2013) with the last questions being open as they were asked for their opinion. The open questions had between 4 and 9

blank lines available to ensure there was no intimidating blank spaces. One of the main disadvantages of open questions according to Creswell (2012) is that the questions will be formatted differently and they will be lengthy to analyse.

Where the questions were preformatted, or closed this was to ensure, in as much as possible, the information was factual with no opinions, with the information elicited quantifiable. The responses enabled a full profile of the early years' education professionals in relation to all areas including their qualifications, their age range, their gender, full or part time employment. By doing this it allowed statements and comparisons about the group. The responses to the questionnaires were further utilised for a comparison of existing statistics, for example the national data in relation to training levels in the Pobal annual services survey 2013. (Pobal 2015) As suggested by Cohen et al. (2007) one of the advantages of using questionnaires is they enable comparisons to be made across the sample group. The questions were designed to gain an insight into their own opinion on quality and the value they have on what they do. The questionnaire was an exploratory questionnaire as identified by Bailey (2004) cited in Briggs and Coleman (2007) as it explored many aspects of the early years' education professionals who participated, yielding robust data that would enrich the interventions.

All questionnaires were coded for each individual participant prior to its distribution. The purpose of the code was to identify the person for cross referencing purposes. They were distributed by hand in an envelope with the individual's name on it and a letter of explanation see Appendix VI – *Invitation to Participate*, which included contact details for the researcher should there be any questions, and a return envelope. In some services, the manager took the role of gathering completed questionnaires and handing them back, some preferred to do it individually. 54 questionnaires were distributed to the six centres of these 31 were completed and returned giving a valid data sample at 57.4%. It should be noted that not all questions were answered by all the respondents.

3.3.2 Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale/Infant/Toddler Environment Rating scale (ECERS/ITERS)

Kirk (2013) suggests that an appropriate variable should be used when conducting experimental research, as this assists the results to be consistent. He states when going to observe people's behaviour it is difficult to know how people are going to react or if there is something going on in their day to day lives that will impact on practice. With this in mind the dependent chosen variable for this study was the environment in which the education and care took place. The physical environment in which the early years' education professionals operate is crucial to what goes on in an early years' education service, as it is the environment that can influence play choices. Catron and Allen (2007) describe the environment as somewhere that should enhance development through play, it also permits the early years' education professional to 'manage' what is going on and implement the service curriculum. In this study, the focus for the quality of provision was the assessment of the physical environment and how the adults interact within it.

The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) was employed for this study and the modified version for the infant rooms the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS). The rating scales were originally devised in the United States in the 1980's as part of a quality review. It has had many additions since then with the advancement of our knowledge of quality in the early years' education including children with disabilities and diversity. (Harms, Clifford and Cryer, 2005) Douglas (2004) states "*The scale is intended to provide an overall picture of the surroundings that have been created for children and adults who share the setting*" (Douglas 2004:183). The scale is often chosen due to its proven record in validity and reliability (South Dublin NEYAI Consortium 2014)

The scale has been widely used in both national and international settings, for example in the Irish context Hennessy and Delaney (1999) conducted a study to identify if ECERS was a tool that was suitable/compatible with Irish services. Overall, they concluded that it could be used with the proviso that not all of the sub headings were compatible with Irish settings or the time allocations are fair to sessional services. In the absence of a similar tool that is freely available for gathering baseline information on quality in Ireland ECERS was chosen as the scale for this study.

ECERS as a scale has been criticised specifically in relation to its lack of emphasis on interpersonal relationships (Mahony and Hayes 2006). Douglas in his (2004) critique of the scale identifies that the scale has a lack of emphasis on play, parental involvement, ethnic, gender and other interpersonal relationships. He recognises in his conclusion that the issue is not with ECERS or any other rating scale but rather the lack of one universal measure of quality that will include the diversity of how services are delivered. He believes that there should be the inclusion of the aims and philosophy of the service. Douglas (2006) and Hennessy and Delany (1999)

ECERS has been modified and amended since Douglas's (2004) critique. Most notably the inclusion of more items to be scored moving from 37 to 43 and the amendment to the subscales which now includes the items these authors had identified as missing. Table 10 identifies the difference from when the scale was critiqued to the version used in this study. The scale now includes the areas that were identified as missing, see Table 10, ECERS Comparison below.

1999 Reproduced from the Hennessy Delaney Research	2006- version used for this study
PERSONAL CARE ROUTINES	Space and Furnishings
FURNISHINGS AND DISPLAY	Personal Care Routines
LANGUAGE-REASONING	Language and Reasoning
FINE AND GROSS MOTOR	Activities
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT	Interactions
CREATIVE ACTIVITIES	Programmes Structure
	Parents and Staff

Table 10 ECERS Comparison

In 2014 a National Early Years Education Access Initiative (NEYAI) project used ITERS and ECERS in a mentoring project in South County Dublin where the study had positive outcomes. The scale was used in tandem with the Irish frameworks one for quality (Síolta) and the other curriculum (Aistear) (O'Dwyer and McCormack 2014). Both these frameworks are widely available and early years' education providers are encouraged to engage with them. In 2016 with the introduction of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) Early Years Education Inspection (EYEIs), Aistear is the framework used to support curriculum development in an early years'

education service. Therefore, it is important that any recommendation to the change in practice would consider the guiding principles of Síolta and the curriculum themes in Aistear to keep services in line with what is required for inspections from both Tulsa and the DES

ECERS fundamentally is a Likert scale where items under seven sub headings are rated 1-7. In sub heading Space and Furnishings there are 8 items to be rated and in total there are 43 items to be scored over the seven sub headings. ITERS too has seven sub heading with 39 items to be scored. This is then further broken down into a series of statements about the item. The statements are ranked 1,3,5 and 7. With 1 being inadequate to 7 being excellent. The statements under 1 (inadequate) are written in the negative where the answer should be no. The rest of the statements are written positively therefore the observer was answering yes if they could see the practice/equipment etc. in the service. For example, Indoor Space is one sub heading; under that heading point 3.1 states that: *Sufficient indoor space for children, adults and children* See Appendix VII - *Sample ECERS page*. In order to receive a yes for this statement the square footage of the room was measured less 20% for fixtures and fittings and checked against requirement of space in the 2006 Pre-school Regulations for the age group.

If a service received a *NO* to all the statements ranked under rating 1, the observer moved on to the statements in rating 3 minimal. The rating only increases to 3 if all the statements under 3 were achieved and so on up to 7. If a service does not achieve a positive mark for each statement they remain at the rating below. If, however the service achieves 50% or more of the statements under the rating they then score the number between the last score achieved and the next, in that case the service would score either 2, 4 or 6. In all cases the observer continued to answer the statements up to rating 7 irrespective if there had been a negative response to any of the statements. While this did not change the rating under the subheading, it permitted scope for positive feedback to the services. For example, you are only missing X out of ranking 3 and you have achieved all other statements so if this is reviewed your service will receive a rating of 7 (excellent) under this subheading. “The additional information may be helpful in making plans for specific improvements” (Harms et al. 2005:6)

3.3.3 Document Analysis

Documents according to Flick (2006) have been produced for some form of practical use, and as stated by Creswell (2012) they are a valuable source of information. Documents can be instructive for understanding social realities in instructional contexts as they provide a specific version of realities. (Flick 2006) They can be gathered from both public and private sources. Documents provide a lot of text data and usually use the language of the topic being researched i.e. language that relates to the subject area. The script already exists so there is no transcribing, they are also convenient for the researcher. (Creswell 2003) The main purpose of document analysis is to gain access to data on a topic or subject, the data may exist already or it may be constructed by others for the research, for example in the form of a reflective diary. (Flick 2006) According to Bell (1999) documents can be used to complement and enhance information gathered from other research methods. This formed part of the rationale for the use of document analysis in this particular study.

Flick (2006) states that by having authentic reports the risk of having hoax documents will be reduced. Four criteria should be employed when deciding on documents for inclusion, authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning. (Bell 1999, Scott 1990, and Flick 2006) The documentation in this study was reviewed giving consideration to these views.

The purpose of the document analysis in this research study was to get a detailed profile of each centre. The documents that were reviewed included the following.

- a) All the services policies and procedures. Every early years' education service must have policies and procedures under which the service operates. They include all areas of provision from how children are cared for during toileting to how team members are recruited.
- b) The services latest Health Service Executive (HSE)/Tusla Inspection Report. This will identify if the service is compliant under the 2006 Pre-school Regulation. It will give precise information if the services are non-compliant on what will need to be improved/changed.

- c) Curriculum Plans. These were used to identify current and planned activities that are provided on a daily basis with the children in the service.

The document analysis was also used to cross reference with data gathered from other research methods. For example, when the baseline identified a low score for the services was that in-line with their most recent pre-school inspection report? When the team members answered questions on curriculum development, their curriculum policy was reviewed to see if it was consistent with their responses both as individuals and as participants in the focus group. Fick (2006) states that document analysis as a standalone tool of enquiry provides limited information.

The document analysis was in the form of a request sent in to each of the services asking for specific documents i.e. their complete policies and procedures, programme structure, handbooks and their latest HSE inspection report. This information request would have been indicated in the introduction letter, see Appendix VI – *Invitation to Participate*. All services complied and furnished the researcher with the documentation requested, one such item was the services most recent HSE inspection report, as the inspection reports are freely available on the Pobal website (www.pobalmaps.ie) some of inspection reports retrieved from this website.

3.3.4 Focus Groups

Morgan (2002) as cited in Briggs and Coleman (2007) define focus groups as a research method that gathers data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher. Participants are usually in groups of 10 to 12 brought together to discuss a particular issue, the session usually lasts for one to two hours. (Leedy and Ormrod 2013) Briggs and Coleman (2007) recommend a group no larger than eight. One of the main advantages of using focus groups is, they can be used where time is an issue. In a focus group as you can survey 10 to 12 people at the same time producing large amounts of data. (Morgan 1996) In addition, according to Creswell (2007) through discussion the responses may yield richer information than would be achieved with individuals. Cohen et al. (2007) identify 12 things focus groups are useful for these include, gathering data on attitudes values and opinions. This is

provided by the participants' own words as they are empowered to speak. The size of the groups was small with eight in two groups the third focus group had all 17 members attending as this was their request. Flick (2006) suggests it is better if the group do not know each other.

A disadvantage of focus groups according to Kitzinger (1995) is that the information can be contrived. Kitzinger (1995) believed that as the focus group does not naturally occur therefore neither does the data. Kaplowitz (2000) stated another disadvantage is the risk individuals may feel when the group discussion is on a sensitive topic.

The purpose of conducting the focus group in this study was to yield more in-depth information and opinions on the topics covered in the questionnaire. Topics on the professional's own values, beliefs, dispositions and what goes on daily in their service. The information was on their opinions and views rather than the more tangible information gathered through the questionnaire.

3.4 THE PROCEDURE

As the research was conducted in stages, the data collection too was conducted in stages. Stage one was where most of the data was collected as it informed stage two. Stage three was the retest of the original rating scale. See table 11 below, stages of the study.

STAGE ONE			
Document Analysis	Questionnaire	Focus Group	Rating Scale Pre-test
STAGE TWO			
Intervention Evaluation			
STAGE THREE			
Rating scale Re-test			

Table 11 Stages of the Study

Prior to any engagement with the services or their teams a presentation was given by the researcher outlining the process that was involved.

The procedure was formatted as follows:

- a) The details of the study were explained to each participant
- b) The Preformatted questionnaires were distributed
- c) Focus groups were facilitated and recorded
- d) An observation schedule time was agreed, where the service and the team were to be observed.
- e) Feed-back was provided to the centre.
- f) The programme to be put into place was agreed
- g) Each centre was revisited to carry out a second observation

3.4.1 The Focus Groups

Focus groups were organised for each of the six groups, only the three intervention groups contributed. The focus groups main aim was to investigate each early years' professional team's opinion on their role as an early years' education professional and how they work with the children. The researcher was the facilitator for each focus group. Given time pressures for the participants the focus groups were held with each individual service, usually at the start of a scheduled team meeting. Each question was placed on a flip chart to keep the discussion focused. Recording devices were used to assist the transcribing.

3.4.2 The Rating Scale

The rating scales were carried out as per the author's instructions, which included becoming familiar with the scale before the observation. The observations were scheduled with the service and parents were informed prior to the event.

There was a natural order to the observations. As the activities happened they were scored, for example in the morning ECERS/ITERS sub scale 9 Greeting/Departure was the observation. The rooms were observed separately, each observation took approximately two hours. The exception to this was the Montessori/ECCE rooms which took on average one hour. Each sub heading was scored all the way to seven, a

note was made if one of the items was missing lower down the scale as this would indicate the score. This, as indicated earlier was for the purpose of positive feedback. It is important to point out that the observer can only mark what is seen on the given day, clarity can be sought by questions at the end of the observation. The services were all scored in the same way. Each room was scored individually and then a combined overall score was given to the services. Where services scored 4 or below which was between Minimal and Good they were offered an intervention in that area. Each service was provided with feedback overall and as individual rooms. This feedback was given to all services including those in the control grouping.

3.4.3 The Feedback Process

Each of the six participating services received feedback on their ITERS and ECERS rating. The feedback given to them was an overall score, with a breakdown of the Sub-Scales, the Areas and the Statements. The reports were shared with the individuals indicating where the services did and did not receive credit for statements under the areas of the sub-scales. It was important for the early years' teams to get this feedback so they too had the information and that the process was open and transparent. This approach to feedback provided the opportunity for the process to be positive. Adults learn best when there is a positive climate built on trust and respect (Chu, 2014) For example, the rating would be higher if you address an area under one of the lower rubrics. This was to ensure clarity for the early years' education teams, so they could identify how they had performed under lower rubrics and how they might be easily rectified.

For example, Service A under the sub heading of 'Language Reasoning' and area 18. Informal use of language did not receive credit for statement 5.3 under the rubric '5'. The statement reads as follows "*Staff add information to expand on ideas presented by children*)" (Harms et al. 2005;38). Service A were in the control group and were therefore not in receipt of intervention, upon re-test the centre received a rating of excellent (7) as 5.3 was the only statement the service did not receive credit for.

Overall the ECERS research indicated that under the sub-scale of Language Reasoning Service 'A' received a rating of 3.8 in the original observation and 5.8 in the retest. Another example of positive feedback, Service B were asked the questions in relation to ITERS under sub-scale Space and Furnishings/ Indoors under rubric 7 about adult furniture as there was no adult furniture at all and the team members were sitting on a large poof with their backs against a bookshelf to bottle feed babies. This question prompted an immediate response, with chairs purchased for all rooms, their suitability was not considered, their function was so Service B could be awarded credit.

The feedback provided an opportunity for discussion and highlighted practices that might benefit from intervention. This was critical because it was necessary for the early years' professionals to see how the smallest change in practice could have major impacts on quality. For example, having a team member who is comfortable while bottle feeding allows for appropriate interactions with the baby in their care which are so crucial for bonding and early communication skills. This opportunity was being lost as early years' education professional(s) were uncomfortable and the process was functional. By having the appropriate furniture for both adults and children indicates that there is a respect for individual needs. For the early years' education professional, they know that the work they do is valued as they are provided with the right tools to enable them to do their job successfully.

The interventions were designed to build capacity and provoke thought about practice in the individual service with the teams. The researcher took a snapshot of the service, in an effort to gain an understanding of the current practice in an effort to build on strengths and explore what areas required development and support. According to Howe and Jacobs (2013) early years' education experts have advocated for a constructivist curriculum, which requires the professional to examine and adapt their classroom practice. The early years' professional must have knowledge of child development and understand the children in their care, as it is these skills that influence their approach to curriculum development and implementation. This information was gathered through the questionnaire, which indicated that each participant had a minimum National Qualification Authority Ireland (NQAI) Level 5 Childcare qualification. All of the teams had the basic required knowledge of early years'

education practice, yet it was not being translated into what they were doing on a daily basis.

3.4.4 The Interventions

Stage one of the development: The interventions were based and designed on the information provided from the base line, the questionnaire and the focus groups. The analysis of the first baseline provided evidence for the gaps that were apparent in the current provision of service. The criteria for intervention were dictated by the score that each centre received on a subscale of either ITERS/ECERS. For example, any area that received a score lower than 4 in each of the centres was offered an intervention. In the intervention group the score was shared with the service and an agreement was reached on the topics they would receive in their interventions. For example, language and reasoning scored 3.1 which is minimal. There are four sub headings under this heading and only one had the potential to be greater by missing one statement under level 5 which is rated as adequate. Therefore, it was offered as an intervention.

Each session was designed to be an hour and a half and different delivery methods were devised over the course of each session to keep participants engaged. The interventions always required input from the teams. For example, the participants carried out the art activities for the researcher to explain the concept of child led art. In the music workshop, they were asked for the top ten songs in the service and then form a band identifying the learning the children might get out of it as they worked. Ten specific interventions were designed in agreement with the teams in each of the services. While designing the interventions, consideration was given to the daily reality of the situation for each of the services. Specifically, there were a number of developments in the sector that were impacting during the research. These included the Pre-school Regulations (2016) and the two national frameworks Síolta (Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE) 2006) the quality framework and Aistear (NCCA 2009) the curriculum framework. All workshops linked the information to these in order to support providers in real time.

The two non-control services did not get all ten interventions identified below. However, the session and the discussion were always about their particular service and their approach to the sub headings and seldom discussed in a general way. The examples used came from the teams and possible solutions discussed. The workshops ‘An Introduction to Aistear’ and ‘Promoting Positive Behaviour’ were topics that were requested from the teams following on from discussion as they felt these were areas of weakness, below is a full listing of the interventions designed and presented.

An Introduction to Aistear	Language and Reasoning	Promoting Positive Behaviour	Policies and Procedures	Programme Structure
Partnership with parents	Environments	Art	Music and Movement	Equality and Diversity

Table 12 List of the Intervention Workshops

3.4.5 The Art Workshop

Both intervention groups part took in this activity. The aim of the session was to make the participants aware of what happens during an art experience when it is adult led. There appeared to be resistance in providing accessibility to certain materials by the early years’ providers, their biggest fear being that the children would use the materials inappropriately, and make a ‘mess’. Yet the richer the environment the richer the experience as children will have more opportunities to explore, discover and learn. French (2007), Donohoe and Gaynor (1999), NCCA (2009).

In order to help the participants understand this concept, the teams were both exposed to the same art experiment. Upon arrival, they were each given a template of a sunflower with green, yellow and brown paint. They were then instructed to colour the centre of the flower brown, the petals yellow and the stalk green. When they were finished, they were told to wait in the corner of the room and read a book. All the pictures were hung to dry. The participants were then presented with a variety of paper along with arts and crafts materials and asked to make a sunflower. The difference in

the results was incredible, for sample see Appendix XV – *The Sunflower*. Upon completion, they were asked to pick out their original flower, as they were all the same they could not. The experience was discussed and the participants explained the difference in the feelings from doing picture one to picture two. The freedom to make the flower themselves was better, they felt it was more creative and talked about the reality of having all the art materials available for the children.

The statement that was reiterated to the participants was, before you embark on an activity think first what is the child gaining from this experience, how is it helping them learn? Activities for children need to be child led, according to Lindon (2005) children will move at their own pace as they are only able to work from their current understanding. If the early year professionals apply this logic to all that they do, all activities should be well thought out and planned prior to implementation. Children are learning and developing all the time and the messages that they receive from the adults are very important. Hayes (2008) suggests that it is more effective to have a well-trained workforce familiar with child development and subject material as they are in an informed position to respond. If the activities become as prescribed as the schedule in which they are set in, the quality and the learning will cease to exist. In this research the activities Hayes (2008) talks about existed. Each of the nine areas that were observed under both scales (ECERS and ITERS) the low ratings were due to inactivity or lack of enough materials to stimulate the play, something an early years' education professional with the skills and knowledge to evaluate the situation would have rectified.

The early years' education practitioners need to reflect on their activities, reflect on the learning, reflect on their role within the learning process. Through the discussion provided by the intervention workshops, the early years' education professionals were enabled to ask questions in a safe environment to challenge themselves, their thinking and their behaviour. They do need to be permitted non-contact hours in their work to be permitted time to reflect and plan. This is one of the biggest criticisms of the capitation for the free pre-school year, that there is minimal funding for non-contact hours (Association of Childhood Professionals (ACP) 2016), yet it is a critical part of

providing a quality early years' education service. The full capitation benefits the parent and not the service.

ITERS and ECERS are evolving to being used as a tool of reflection rather than research (Mathers et al. 2007). In this study this was apparent, where services were involved in the process and had access to all the information, they too could make changes to their practice without any intervention.

3.5 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

There are two main goals when carrying out research according to Kirk (2013). The first is that the research would deduce some valid conclusions and the second would be that following the research some generalisations about the population could be made. Hammersley (2007) states that the two criteria for assessing educational research are validity and relevance. The two are measured differently validity is about sound evidence that is both believable and credible, relevance is measured by the purpose of the research and interest to its audience.

The research was completed under a Postpositivism paradigm using reliable methods of quantitative and qualitative data gathering tools. Research needs to be safeguarded against the threats to its validity. In experimental research, there is the threat of internal validity. One of these threats is using procedures that are inadequate and the second is the characteristics of the participants themselves. For example, this could have been problematic in this research study as there were staff changes within the centre, thankfully this happened prior to the intervention and the new team member was prepared to participate. Another threat to experimental design according to Creswell (2003) is if the researcher generalises beyond the participants of the study. Once aware of the validity pitfalls it is easier to navigate to ensure that they do not occur.

Collecting the data through quantitative and qualitative methods allows for reliability Cohen (2007) describes this method as triangulation. Creswell (2012) refers to it as a method of corroborating evidence. The word itself is borrowed from the nautical sector for location (mapping) purposes. In research triangulation is also the method used for

mapping or providing greater explanation for human behaviour. Its purpose is to demonstrate concurrent validity.

Cohen et al. (2007) discuss the different types of triangulation. Time triangulation which relates to taking cross sections from longitudinal studies. Space triangulation which looks at cross cultural techniques. Theoretical triangulations looking at alternative/ competing viewpoints to look at the theory. Methodological triangulations are where the researcher uses the same method on different occasions or different methods on the same object of the study. This can occur in two ways, within methods and between methods. The information on how the study can be reproduced is contained within the methods, technically if the study was reproduced by another researcher they would still arrive at the same conclusion. The second method is using one or more methods in the pursuit of the same objective, the two methods prove the same thing or achieve the same objective. In this study, the method applied was data triangulation, two different methods were used not to provide the same information but rather to support the findings. Flick (2006) describes this method as using different data sources to come to the same conclusion. For example, the rating scale will be cross referenced with the formal Tulsa inspection reports. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, one piece of evidence supports the other both obtained through the use of different methods. (Creswell 2007) Flick (2006) notes that while triangulation was first introduced as a strategy for validating results of individual methods, the focus is shifting towards enriching and completing knowledge.

Harms et al. (2006) have stated that they have conducted testing of their scale to ensure its validity, while this is a revised version of the original they state that they expect to maintain that validity. They have conducted several tests of the scale for the inter-rater reliability ensuring the validity and the reliability of the scale. For those using the scales ITERS and the ECERS, they are reliable at the indicator level and item level and in turn the total score. According to Harms, Clifford and Cryer (2005) there is a long history of the scales being used and that it has good predictive validity.

Christensen (2001) argues that it is the science of the inquiry that makes the methods we choose free of bias and opinion. What makes a test valid and reliable it that it is

framed within a recognised tradition of research. This research was bedded in the experimental model, a simple design cause and effect. According to Cohen et al. (2007) when conducting experiments, it is not possible to ensure that all variables will remain constant. To assist in combatting this, services were chosen where there was one or more with the same management structure and equal in type and size. Triangulation was applied to ensure that the data collected was accurate, cross referencing qualitative and quantitative data collect methods. The main observation instrument is one that is widely used in studies similar to this one.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

3.6.1 3.6.1 Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale and the Infant and Toddler Environment rating scale.

The authors of the scale Harms et al. (2005) provide very clear instructions on how to score or rate the observations once complete. The observer marked each statement as it was witnessed on the day of observation. For example, sand/water play was witnessed, for statements contained under this section see Table 13 – Sample of statements under the ITERS/ECERS subscale Sand/Water.

1 Inadequate	2	3 Minimal	4	5 Good	6	7 Excellent
1.1 No provision for sand or water play		3.1 Some provision for sand or water play accessible outdoors or indoors		5.1 Provision for sand and water play		7.1 provision for sand and water play both indoors and outdoors
1.2 No Toys to use for sand or water		3.2 Some and/water toys accessible		5.2 Variety of toys accessible for plan		7.2 Different activities done with sand and water
				5.3 Sand or water play available to children for at least one hour daily		

Table 13 Sample of statements under ITERS/ECERS Subscale Sand/Water

Sand/Water														
	Y	N		Y	N		Y	N		Y	N	Sand	Indoors	Outdoors
1.1			3.1			5.1			7.1			Water		
1.2			3.2			5.2			7.2					

						5.3						5.3, Total time sand or water play
--	--	--	--	--	--	-----	--	--	--	--	--	------------------------------------

Table 14 Sample of marking system in ITERS/ECERS Subscale Sand and Water

When analysing a statement that has been observed and where the researcher awarded a yes response. The statements are organised under odd numbers as per Table 14, if all statements under a number are achieved the room/service is awarded that score 1,3,5 or 7. Alternatively if a service/room does not achieve all of the statements but more than 50% of them then an even number is awarded 2,4 or 6, which have no statements underneath them. Harms et al. (2005) describes an alternative score where the observer continues to the end of the statements regardless of not achieving a positive for all the statements under the preceding number. They recommend this if the scale is to be used in research or quality improvement.

The rating scale data was analysed using a programme in Microsoft XP excel. The template was a soft copy which included formulas to calculate scores, these excel sheets were based on the hard score sheets completed during the observation which are provided with the original copy of the scale see Appendix X – *Sample Observation*. The excel template was designed with each of the statements and then the option to put in a tick in the cell beside it if achieved, therefore calculating the score for each heading and cross checked with the hard copy. These scores were then auto calculated and divided by the number of statements answered to find the average score as instructed by the authors. For example, under Space and Furnishings there are eight sub headings with 81 quality statements. The score for Space and Furnishings is calculated by adding together the rating achieved by the eight space and furnishing sub headings, and divided by 81. This provides the average rating under Space and Furnishings. This procedure was completed with all six services and was used to identify the base line for each of the services.

3.6.2 Questionnaires

Prior to distribution all questionnaires were coded, these codes were known to the researcher and each participant knew their own code. This code was used as an identifier both in the questionnaire and in the focus group's transcripts for cross

referencing purposes. To analysis the data from the questionnaire, the information was inputted into a Microsoft XP excel spread sheet. The individual questions were put into individual cells and sub divided depending on the response options. For example, if the answer required a response of Yes or No it was sub-divided into two see Table 15 below.

Do you plan the activities	
Yes	No
1	0

Table 15 Sample of Questionnaire Analysis

The number one was recorded under Yes or No depending on the response, again see the sample in Table 15. This permitted counting once the data was inputted in the appropriate cell indicating how many yes responses and how many responses were no. For questions that had more than two options, all options were included in their own cell and marked the same way as before with the number one for example see Table 16

The Plan is designed by					
Manager	Room Leader	Prescribed Curriculum	Planned Environment	Don't Know	Other
1	1	0	0	0	0

Table 16 Sample of Questionnaire Analysis

Where there was multiple choice the number one was put in the cell under the chosen answer. The non- responses were calculated when the number of responses did not match the number of respondents. Where the question had been open this information was searched for trends and themes by identifying similar works or phrases. Each questionnaire had been coded before distribution to keep track of the information and provide opportunity for comparison for individual services.

3.6.3 Document Analysis

When gathering the information from the services a cover page with tick boxes was developed in order to track the documents as they were received. Each service had their own checklist of items that were required for the study. By keeping a check list system, the documents were tracked and it was easy to identify what had been received from each of the individual services. The rationale for gathering the documentation as stated earlier was to act as a cross check method for the data received. For example, there was no consistency in one services answer to planning in either the questionnaires or the focus groups. The services had a strong policy on curriculum development which was not apparent from the team's identification on daily activities, two pieces of data giving different results. A more structured approach was taken when reviewing the Inspection reports. A simple table was devised to look at each regulation and to ascertain whether the service was compliant or not. This lead to easy comparison with the rating scales.

Each service provided their latest pre-school inspection report from the Health Service Executive/Tulsa and their policies and procedures. The main purpose for collecting these documents was to cross reference the data for consistency with questionnaires and the focus group. The baseline achieved from the ITERS and ECERS was cross referenced with the pre-school inspection report. The inspection data was analysed using a simple table. Each regulation was put on a row and each service had two columns compliant (C) or non-compliant (N). This lead to easy comparison with the rating scales. For example, see Table 17: Sample of Pre-school Inspection Report Analysis.

REGULATION:	CENTRE											
	A		B		C		D		E		F	
	C	N	C	N	C	N	C	N	C	N	C	N
<i>C= Compliant N= Non- Compliant</i>												
Information on Pre-school;10	1		1		1		1		1		1	
Information on Pre-school; 11	1		1						1			1
Information on Pre-school Setting; 31	1		1		1		1				1	

Table 17 Sample of Pre-school Inspection Report Analysis

3.6.4 Focus Groups

To gather the data from the focus groups a recording device was used. The recordings were then transcribed with the permission of the participants. No software was used in the process. The code that was individual to each participant was used to identify who said what, once this process was completed the information needed to be analysed to include it as part of the study and the findings. In order to analyse the information for themes or recurring answers a word search was used in Microsoft XP word. The responses of the first five respondents were used to identify if there were similar answers using the same words or phrases. The researcher searched popularity of words and phrases like the questionnaire open questions. Each individual services response was referenced to the services questionnaire responses. The purpose of this was to look for consistencies between the participant's responses. For example, the answers on planning were similar to the questionnaire for one group, yet not consistent with the policies and procedures when crossed referenced with them.

3.7 ETHICS

Research Ethics are a set of guidelines to assist the researcher in making difficult decisions in the relationships that will exist, the relationships are between society and science, professional issues and the treatment of the participants (Christensen 2001). The following six points are areas that were considered to ensure the highest ethical standards for this study.

Responsibility for the ethics

In the first instance the researcher has overall responsibility for the ethics of his/her study.

Minimal risk for participants

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) researchers have a moral obligation to conduct research in a way that minimises the potential harm to the participants. Every effort to ensure that the relationship that exists between the researcher and the participants is never used to manipulate or exploit the participants or findings. Cohen

et al. (2007) recognise that there is dilemma between the search for truth and the participant's rights and values potentially being threatened.

Informed Consent

Informed consent was sought and each participant was asked to sign a letter of participation which indicated their consent to participate in the study. This included the plain language statement asking them to confirm that they were over 18 including assuring participants that their participation was voluntary and they had the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. See Appendix I. Diener and Crandall as cited in Cohen et al. (2007) define informed consent as the procedures in which individuals choose whether or not to participate in the investigation. In order for participants to give full consent they must understand what is being asked of them, understand the parameters of the research and that they are fully informed throughout the research. Robson (1993) identifies ethical dilemmas for researchers. Involving people without their knowledge, coercing participation, these dilemmas were overcome in this research through the consent forms and the presentation that was given to all services who expressed an interest in participating.

As the observations were taking place in early years' education settings where children were going about their normal daily routine a letter regarding the study was sent to all parents. This letter informed them of the service's participation and the role of the researcher, included in the text of the letter was confirmation that no child would be observed as part of the study and no consent for participation was sought. Each service would have a code known only to the researcher.

Duty to care

The researcher has been Garda vetted. It was specified to all participants and parents that if any behaviour was observed that could have put a child at risk that the observer had a duty to care, and services' policies and procedures would be adhered to. Mason (2002) argues that social science researchers have to adhere to fundamentally important ethical obligations, such as informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, honesty and accuracy in data, and sensitivity to cultural values.

Confidentially

Confidentiality was a key component of the ethics. The threat in this study is that a service or an individual is identifiable in the text. Everyone's right to privacy was protected at all times. The participant's anonymity was protected through the use of a coding system, once a participant agreed to be part of the study they were assigned a code. All communication with the researcher was then done through the use of this code.

Control Group

In addition to this as outlined by Cohen et al. (2007) there is the issue of denying the control groups the intervention. On completion of the study the control groups will be offered similar type interventions.

Ethical considerations were maintained throughout the process of this research. All Dublin City University's ethical requirements were fulfilled following an ethical application submitted and at all stages of the research the Universities guidelines were adhered to. Appendix III– *Ethics Application*

3.7.1 Limitations of the Study

The study was not without its challenges. The sample size for this study was small with only five completing the study. The size impacted on the ability to employ any statistical analysis and therefore a much larger sample would be required in order to generalise the findings.

An additional challenge emerged from the voluntary nature of the study. The commitment required was greater for those who were part of the intervention groups. The teams from the services were asked to participate in the intervention workshops. The workshops were in the evening time after work. One of the services withdrew just before stage two was to start. A second service did not engage fully. It is hard to get people to engage in a process when they see no value in it for them.

The constraints of time, the support to the services could not be ongoing as it needed a beginning and an end. If there was no time limit other areas which needed support could have been assisted.

3.7.2 Strengths of the study

The study had representation from all three different types of care in a formal setting, both full day care and sessional and from the two categories of provider Private and Community. It was also conducted across two HSE areas which gave validity to the review of the HSE reports as they were not all conducted by a single person or Inspection team. The study was simple in its design to see if behaviour could be modified or changed by addressing what the actual need was in addressing quality using all resources available including the team members.

While identified as a weakness the voluntary capacity of the study was also a strength as those that participated were committed to it for their own reasons which was a more enjoyable experience than having participants not willing to engage.

3.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter described in detail the methodology chosen to conduct the research. Through discussion and exploration, the chapter justified the rationale for these choices and methods applied. The chapter described how these methods were applied to achieve the results used in both the findings and conclusion chapters. The findings from the research will be presented in the next chapter.

4 CHAPTER FOUR: DATA FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The findings from this study are presented in this chapter. Four methods of data collection were used to gather the data for this research. The methods used were both quantitative and qualitative in their approach. The initial data was gathered through questionnaires with the aim of compiling a profile of the early years' professionals who were participating on the research. A document analysis was conducted on the documentation that was common to all the services and included their Health Service

Executive (HSE)/Tulsa Inspection Reports and the service policies and procedures. The third method used to gather the data was a quality rating scale, Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) and Infant and Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS). (Harms, Clifford and Cryer 2005) The scales are internationally recognised as a tool to measure quality provision in early years' education settings. The fourth and final method was a qualitative method where the intervention groups were invited in to attend focus groups.

4.2 THE BASELINE FINDINGS

4.2.1 The Early Years Education Services

The services in the study were a cross section of the type of early years' education provision currently available in Ireland. They are matched by hours of provision, Full day care which is five hours or more of care and sessional which is three to three and half hours. Early years educational services in Ireland are in the main owned privately or managed by a voluntary board known as community providers as they operate as non-for profit organisations. Two full day care facilities and two sessional facilities that are operated by private business and two full day care operated by a voluntary board from the local community. The full day care services offer care and education for children aged from 6 months to 4/5 years and the sessional offer care and education for children ages 3/4 years to 5 years. See Table 18.

Type of service	Age Range 0-3	Age Range 3-5	Age Range 5+
Full Day Care	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sessional	No	No	No

Table 18 Age Range in different types of service

In total, there were six services, three in the control group and three in the intervention group. From the services, there was a total of 54 early years' education personnel who agreed to participate within the study giving a 57% participation rate. 36% of the early years' education professionals did not wish to participate with 7% indicating personal reasons during the study for their withdrawal.

4.2.2 Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale /Infant and Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ECERS and ITERS)

The ECERS and ITERS were used to identify a quality baseline in their provision. The purpose was to identify a baseline score for each of the six services prior to the intervention. The scales were administered in all of the participating services to assist in the identification of the current level of the quality of services provided in the key areas identified below in Table 19

In the sessional services ECERS was the only scale used, as they only provide care for children in pre-school and do not offer care and education to children under 3 years. Both were used in the full day care settings, the ITERS was used for the infant and toddler room while ECERS was used in the pre-school room.

The scale rates service's quality on seven subscales which are further broken down into individual areas with a set of statements. For example, the first sub scale is on Space and Furnishings with eight areas identified for observation and rating see table 19 below. These areas have a set of statements that the service needs to meet during the observation to receive credit for it.

These statements are divided into four groups; each grouping has a marking rubric that is numerical. 1 is inadequate, 3 is Minimal, 5 is Good and 7 is Excellent. If a service achieves 50% or more but less than 100% of the statements under one of the groupings, they achieve a score between the previous group and the one they are seeking credit for. For example, 100% of the statements under 3 (minimal) was achieved but only 50% of those under 5 (Good) the service is awarded 4.

Table 19 provides an overview of the seven sub -scales of ECERS and ITERS. The Sub-heading are further broken down into areas for observation.

<u>SPACE AND FURNISHING</u>	<u>ACTIVITIES</u>
Indoor space	Fine Motor
Furniture for routine care, play and learning	Art

Furniture for relaxation and comfort	Music/Movement
Room arrangement for play	Blocks
Space for privacy	Sand/Water
Child- related display	Dramatic play
Space for gross motor play	Nature/Science
Gross motor equipment	Math/Number
<u>PERSONAL CARE ROUTINE</u>	Use of TV, Video, and or computers
Greeting Departing	<u>INTERACTION</u>
Meals/Snacks	Supervision of gross Motor
Nap/Rest	General Supervision of Children (other than gross motor)
Toileting/Diapering	Discipline
<u>LANGUAGE- REASONING</u>	Staff-Child Interactions
Books and Pictures	Interactions among Children
Encouraging Children to Communicate	<u>PROGRAMME STRUCTURE</u>
Using Language to develop reasoning skills	Schedule
Informal use of language	Free Play
	Group Time
	Provisions for children with disabilities
<u>PARENTS AND STAFF</u>	
Staff Interaction and co-operation	Provision for parents
Supervision and evaluation of staff	Provision for personal needs of staff
Opportunities for professional growth	Provision for professional needs of staff

Table 19 The ECERS and ITERS subscales Harms et al. (2005:9)

Upon completion of the research there were three services in the control group and two services who received an intervention. Table 20 identifies which services were in receipt of an intervention and which services were in the control group.

Intervention	Control
Service B	Service A
Service D	Service E
	Service F

Table 20 Intervention and Control Groups

4.2.2.1 Summary of Baseline Results from ECERS and ITERS

Following the analysis of the pre-and post-intervention scores, services were provided with an average overall score for their service. Where there was more than one toddler or ECCE room therefore using the same scale to gather the baseline an average was calculated from the scales across the rooms. Therefore, in the two full day care services participating they were given an average ECERS and average ITERS score. The rationale for this average score was to permit whole team feedback to see where the service rated as a whole unit. Tables 21 and 22 illustrate the ECERS and ITERS breakdown. ITERS only applies to the full day care services as they cater for children in the baby and toddler rooms. The scoring for the services are between 0-7. Where a service scores 0 it means that the statements under 1 (inadequate) were not even met and a 7 indicates excellent. The scoring key is as follows:

Score Key: 1 = Inadequate 3 = Minimal 5= Good 7 = Excellent.

SERVICE		Baseline	Retest	(+ or -)
Control	Service A	4.8	5.2	+.4
Control	Service E	4.3	4.1	-.2
Control	Service F	5	5.3	+.3
Intervention	Service B	4.1	4.8	+.7
Intervention	Service D	3.6	4.5	+.9

Table 21 Summary of ECERS Pre-and Post-Intervention scores

SERVICE		Baseline	Retest	(+ or -)
Control	Service A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Control	Service E	3.7	3.6	-.1
Control	Service F	N/A	N/A	N/A
Intervention	Service B	4.5	4.8	+.3
Intervention	Service D	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 22 Summary of ITERS Pre-and-post Intervention scores

Tables 21 and 22 indicate the scores the services received pre and post intervention. For example, Control Service A received a pre intervention score of 4.8 and a post intervention score of 5.2 The two full day cares services B and E had observations in both scales ECERS and ITERS. The analyses indicate that the services achieved a pre-intervention rate of between minimal (3) and good (5) with the exception of

service F control group who achieved an average of 5 (Good). As part of the process all participating services both control and intervention service received feedback on their baseline. The rating was explained and where they received credits for statements and in the case where they did not receive credit they were told why. Following the intervention there were improvements in the average score for the control groups (A, and F) the improvements in the intervention groups (D) was the most significant with their score increasing by .9 from 3.6 which is just above minimal to 4.5 which is just below good. Service B also saw increases, in ECERS they gained .7 of a mark from 4.1 to 4.8 and in ITERS they gained .3 mark moving from 4.5 to 4.8. The scores achieved by service B has them rated just below good (5) but moved away from the minimal score of (3).

4.2.2.2 Individual Service Findings

The service's results are presented in their grouping of either control or intervention. The control group comprising of the early years' education services of A, E and F are presented first. These are followed by the intervention group of services B and D. The data analysis explains the detail of the highest achieving score and the lowest achieving score for the control group services. Where the intervention services achieved a score less than four in an area, this area was recommended for an intervention workshop.

4.2.2.2.1 Service A – Control Group

Service A is a private sessional service. The ECCE room provides a Montessori curriculum under the Aistear Framework (NCCA 2009). The service had two team members in the room during the observation and the capacity of the room is 22 children (Health Service Executive (HSE) /Tusla 2016). This service was first observed in October 2013 with the retest 20 months later in May 2015. Overall the service achieved an ECERS score of 4.8 on the initial visit. This rating of 4.8 ranks the service just below good (5). The post intervention test indicates an increase ECERS

rating of 5.2. Of the seven sub scales four saw an increase in their rating, two saw a decrease with one remaining the same.

ECERS Sub Scales	The baseline (B)	The Retest (R)
Space and Furnishings	4.6	5.4
Personal Care Routines	6.4	6
Language and Reasoning/Talking	3.8	5.8
Activities	4	3.8
Interaction	6.4	6.4
Programme Structure	4	4
Parents and Staff	4.3	5.7
Total	4.8	5.2

Table 23 Service A ECERS Baseline and Retest

Table 23 indicates that Service A scored highest in Personal Care Routines and Interactions. This score indicates that the provision is between good (5) and excellent (7).

Under the sub-Heading Personal Care Routines, the service dropped from 6.4 in the pre- intervention test to 6 in the post intervention test. The Personal Care Routines subscale has six individual items, numbered A -F with their own statements.

- (A) Greeting and departure. These were always excellent achieving a rating of 7, both pre and post intervention.
- (B) Meals and Snacks. Statement 7.2 under the rubric of 7 states “*Child-sized severing utensils used by children to make self -help easier.*” (Harms et al. 2005:24) the children should serve themselves using child-sized utensils. Children bring in their own snack. The kitchen facilities for food preparation were not used during the observation. Therefore, it would be difficult for the service to achieve full marks.

- (C) Nap/Rest. As this is a sessional service with children attending for a maximum of three and a half hours a nap/rest is not facilitated. Therefore, area this was marked N/A which is permitted in the scale.
- (D) Toileting and nappy changing. All children in this service are toilet trained. The facilities are adequate, giving the service a rating of excellent (7)
- (E) Health Practices: the post intervention rating for health practices was between minimal and good (4) while in the pre-intervention they scored between inadequate and minimal (2). Practice was observed to be poor as there was no observation of toilets being checked, nor was there a rota on the wall to indicate when they had last been inspected.

The change in (E) Health Practices impacted on the score bringing it down from 6.4 in the baseline to 6 in the retest.

Under the sub-Heading Interactions, the service did not change from the pre-intervention scoring of 6.4 the post intervention test.

The results indicate the lowest score was obtained by Service A was in Language Reasoning/Talking. This increased between the two observations from 3.8 pre-intervention rating to 5.8 post intervention. There are four areas in this subscale numbered A – D with their own statements.

(B) Encouraging children to communicate. This area had an increase from 4 to 6, the improvement was the awarding of statement “5.2” where the materials for encouraging communication were more available throughout the room.

(C) Using language to develop reasoning skills. The service improved in this area increasing their rating from 3 to 6. In the pre-interventions the two statements under rubric 5 were not observed. “5.1 *Staff talk about logical relationships while children play with materials that stimulate reasoning and 5.2 Children encouraged to talk through or explain their reasoning when solving problems*”. (Harms et al. 2005:37). Both of these statements received credit in the post- intervention test.

(D) Informal use of Language. This area also saw an increase in ratings moving from 4 in the pre-intervention to excellent (7) in the post-interventions. During the pre-intervention the only statement where there was not positive feedback was under the

rubric 5 and statement 5.3 staff adding language was not observed on the day, while it was observed during the post-intervention observation.

The sub-headings of Activities and Parents and Staff saw a decrease in their overall rating. The areas with the largest decrease under Activities was the area for ‘Fine Motor’ where the rating decreased from 6 to 4. The reason for this was a change in credit given to statement “5.2 *Materials are well organised*” (Harms et al. 2005:39).

Overall the items that were improved on were items that were highlighted during the feedback session following the baseline data analyses presented to the service.

4.2.2.2.2 Service E – Control

This control group service is a community full day-care. The service was purpose built with Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP) funding and the service is run by a voluntary board of directors. There is a full-time manager in place. This service was tested in May 2014 and retested 11 Months later in June 2015. There were three rooms observed, a baby and toddler room and two ECCE rooms. The capacity of the Baby/Toddler room was 18. On the day of observation there were six babies and six toddlers. Service E’s ECERS and ITERS summary ratings are shown in Tables 24 and 25.

The ECERS rating as indicated is between minimal and good (4.3), while the ITERS rating indicated an overall rate of 3.7 which again is between minimal and good. The summary of ratings for Service E under the seven Sub Scales are broken down in Table 24 Service E control ECERS and Table 25 Service E Control ITERS Subheading below.

Service E ECERS Sub Scales	(B)	(R)
Space and Furnishings	4.8	4.8
Personal Care Routines	4.6	4.4
Language and Reasoning/Talking	3.3	3

Activities	3.4	3.3
Interaction	5.8	5
Programme Structure	3.7	4.7
Parents and Staff	4.0	4.1
Total	4.3	4.1

Table 24 Service E ECERS Baseline and Retest

Overall the ECERS rating indicates a decrease from the pre-intervention to post intervention from 4.3 to 4.1. Two of the sub-headings saw an increase while four saw a decrease with one remaining the same.

Table 24 Service E control ECERS rating indicates that Service E rated the highest under ‘Interaction’ on the pre-intervention observation. It remained the highest in the post- intervention observation even though it decreased from 5.8 to 5. The most significant decrease under the ‘Interaction’ subheading was in the area General Supervision of children. In this area under the rubric 5, “5.3 Staff show awareness of the whole group even when working with one child or a small group” (Harms et al. 2005:59) the decrease in rating was from 7 to 4 as indicated in Table 25 Service E Control ITERS and ECERS areas under sub-heading Interaction The reason was the service did not receive credit for 5.3 is because one child was left wandering around with on adult engagement for 15 minutes.

The two lowest scores for Service E under the ECERS subheading were Language and Reasoning and Activities.

SERVICE E ITERS Sub Scales	(B)	(R)
Space and Furnishings	4.8	4
Personal Care Routines	3.8	3.5
Language and Reasoning/Talking	2.7	2.7
Activities	2.2	3.2
Interaction	5.8	4.4
Programme Structure	3.3	4.7

Parents and Staff	4.3	4.3
Total	3.7	4

Table 25 Service E ITERS Baseline and Retest

The ITERS results of the pre-intervention indicated that Service E received the highest rating in Sub Scale ‘Interaction’, this decreases in the post intervention to 4.4. The area of discipline for ITERS saw a dramatic reduction post-interaction observation from a rating of 5 down to 2. This decrease was due to the third statement under rubric 3 “3.3 *Expectations for behaviour are largely appropriate for age and developmental level of children.*” (Harms et al. 2005:60). The day of the observation when children were being disciplined there were no explanations of what the child’s inappropriate behaviours were for. The language was poor in relation do describing appropriate behaviour. The children in this age group were made to share, this is not age appropriate for children under 3.

There are four areas under the Interaction Sub Scale for ITERS and five under ECERS, there is slight differences between them see table 26.

ITERS	B	R	ECERS	B	R
Supervision of play and learning	5	6	Supervision of gross motor activates	5	5
Peer Interaction	6	6	General supervision of children	7	4
Staff-Child Interaction,	7	4	Discipline	6	6
Discipline	5	2	Staff and Child Interactions	7	6
			Interactions among children	4	4

Table 26 Service E ITERS and ECERS Intervention

Both scales rated low in the Sub Scale Language and Reasoning.

ECERS rated 3.3 pre-intervention and 3 post -intervention. The ECERS Language and Reasoning Sub Scale has four areas number A to D

(A) Books and Pictures, this area achieved a rating of 3, all the statements under rubric 5 with the exception of one did not receive credit on the day of observation. The book shelf was not accessible with limited subjects and titles. The post-intervention rating decreased to 2.

(B) Encouraging children to communicate. This area had an increase from 4 to 6. The increase occurred with the awarding of credit for statement “5.2 *Materials that encourage children to communicate are accessible in a variety of interest centres*”. (Harms et al. 2005:36)

(C) Using language to develop reasoning skills. The service improved in this area moving from a score of 3 to 6. In the pre-intervention observation, the two statements under the rubric 5 where staff encourage language about logical relationships and explain their problem solving were not observed, they were observed in the post-intervention observation.

(D) Informal use of Language. The improvement under this area was from 4 to 7. The increase in the rating was due to 5.3 under rubric 5. Credit was given for the early years’ education professional adding language to ideas presented by children

ITERS achieved 2.7 pre-intervention and remained at 2.7 post intervention under the subheading Language and Reasoning/Talking.

The results indicate that sub-heading Activities on ITERS obtained the lowest rating of 2.2 pre-intervention, the post-intervention rating showed an increase to 3.2. The areas for observation in Activities are presented in Table 27 Service E Control ITERS Sub Scale Activities. The common theme for low ratings through all the activities was insufficient materials/resources along with inadequate availability and accessibility of the activities. For example, a sand and water tray was in the room, but it was not freely available for the children. It was not a scheduled daily/weekly activity and children were not permitted to play with it by choice.

Toddlers Activities

B=baseline R B R
=Retest

B R

B R

Fine Motor	3	3	Music and Movement	2	2	Sand/Water	2	2
Active physical play	1	2	Blocks	3	4	Nature /Science	1	3
Art	4	4	Dramatic Plan	3	4	Promoting acceptance of diversity	1	1

Table 27 Service E ITERS Activities

Overall the items that were improved on were items that were highlighted during the feedback session following the baseline data analyses presented to the Service.

4.2.2.2.3 Service F- Control Group

Service F was in the control grouping. It is a sessional Montessori service privately operated. The service was observed in October 2013 with the re-test 20 months later in May 2015. The rooms are a combination of free play and Montessori where the children spend time in the free play room and the Montessori room. In total, there are four rooms and five team members.

The services pre-intervention rating was 5 which is ranked good. The post-intervention indicates a slight improvement to 5.3 which is just above good. The results under the seven sub scales are presented in Table 28 Service F Control Baseline and Retest of ECERS Scores Four of the sub-headings saw an increase with three remaining the same.

ECERS Sub Scales	Baseline	Re-Test
Space and Furnishings	4.8	5
Personal Care Routines	6.4	7
Language and Reasoning	4.8	4.8
Activities	3.9	4.2

Interaction	7	7
Programme Structure	4	5
Parents and Staff	4.8	4.8
Total	5	5.3

Table 28 Services F ECERS Baseline and Retest

The results indicate that Service F achieved two ratings of excellent (7) one in Interaction with the second in Personal Care Routines. Personal Care Routines indicated an increase from 6.4 pre-intervention to 7 Post intervention. There are six areas observed under Personal Care Routines in the pre-intervention observation the Service rated 4 under the area of Meals and Snacks. Under the rubric 5. 5.1 states “*Most staff sit with children during meals and group snacks*” (Harms et al. 2005:24). During meal/snack times it was observed that the early years’ education professionals used the opportunity to do cleaning or paper work.

The weakest score observed was under the sub-heading Activities, the breakdown of this score is shown in Table 29 Service F Control ECERS Activities

ACTIVITIES - ECERS

B=baseline R =Retest	B	R		B	R		B	R
Fine Motor	6	6	Blocks	2	2	Nature Science	6	6
Art	3	3	Sand/Water	3	6	Maths/Number	6	6
Music/Movement	3	3	Dramatic Plan	2	2	Promoting acceptance of diversity	4	4

Table 29 Service F ECERS Activities

The table 29 indicates an extensive increase in the ‘Sand/Water’ between the pre-intervention observation and the post-intervention observation. In the pre-intervention,

the service was missing a variety⁷ of toys for water/sand play. This was rectified in the post-intervention observation. As this service operates a Montessori curriculum the scores are high in the areas where there is Montessori equipment or philosophy. For example, Fine Motor and Maths/Number. The block play has a low scoring of below minimal (2) as the only blocks available is the Montessori Equipment for example, the pink tower or the broad stair.

Overall the items that were improved on were items that were highlighted during the feedback session following the baseline data analyses presented to the Service.

4.2.2.2.4 Service B – Intervention Group

Service B is a full day care service owned and managed privately. The service was first observed in Sept 2013 and retested 20 months later in May 2015. The service has three rooms and eight team members. There was a change in personnel in the service and members of the team moved to facilitate ECCE. When the service was observed pre-intervention a team member with a degree worked with the babies. In the post-intervention observation, she had been moved to work with the ECCE (free pre-school year) children. The members present were the members who took part in the interventions. The results are shown in Table 30 Service B Intervention ECERS rating and Table 31 Service B Intervention ITERS rating⁷ below.

ECERS Sub Scales	(B)	(R)
Space and Furnishings	3.9	4.5
Personal Care Routines	5.1	6.2
Language and Reasoning/Talking	3.3	4.5
Activities	3	3.8

⁷ Variety is explained in the clarification notes in the rating scale. – Variety is represented in toy characteristics such as use, size transparency level, shape, colour and type of properties should be considered

Interaction	3.9	5
Programme Structure	5	4
Parents and Staff	4.2	5.3
Total	4.1	4.8

Table 30 Service B ECERS Rating

The service achieved a pre-intervention ECERS rating of 3.9 which is ranked half way between minimal (3) and good (5). The post-intervention indicates an improvement of .7 to 4.6 which is still below good. The results under the seven sub scales are presented in Table 30 Service B Intervention ECERS rating. Six of the sub-headings saw an increase with only one decreasing.

Using ECERS Service B achieved the highest under the sub-heading of Personal Care Routines with a rating of 5.1 pre- intervention increasing to 6.2 post-intervention. The most dramatic increase was under area Health Practices. Both ECERS room increased from a rating of 2 to 7. In both rooms, it was the handwashing practices where they improved. Under the rubric of 3, 3.1 states “*Adequate⁸ handwashing by staff and children takes place after wiping noses, after handling animals or when otherwise soiled*” (Harms et al. 2005:30). Both rooms carried out activities where there was no handwashing either before or after, one group were making buns, while the other played with playdough. In general handwashing practices were poor. Meals and Snacks increased from a rating of 4 pre-intervention to 6 post-interventions. Under the rubric of 5, 5.1 requires team members to sit with the children during the process. Service B has a separate dining room where the children come to eat, so once the food is served the team members can sit with them.

Activities rated the lowest with a pre-intervention rating of 3 and increased slightly post intervention to 3.8. See Table 33 Service B Intervention ECERS Activities

ITERS Sub Scales	(B)	(R)
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⁸ Adequate handwashing means that hands are washed thoroughly with soap and running water and dried with a towel that is not share or hands are air dried.

Space and Furnishings	4.6	4.6
Personal Care Routines	6.2	6.3
Language and Reasoning/Talking	2.7	2.7
Activities	4.3	5.1
Interaction	5.5	5.5
Programme Structure	3.7	3.7
Parents and Staff	3.9	4.3
Total	4.5	4.8

Table 31 Service B Intervention ITERS Rating

The highest ITERS rating achieved was in the Sub Scale Personal Care Routines. This sub-heading achieved a rating of 6.2 pre-intervention increasing slightly to 6.3 post intervention. Greeting and departure, was rated 6 for this item. Under meals and snacks the service achieved excellent (7). The lowest rating under Personal Care Routines was under 'Health Practices' which was under the rubric 5 and related to handwashing practices.

Under the sub section Space and Furnishings there are elements that this service will never achieve an excellent score on. Under the area indoor, 5.3 states that the room is accessible to adults and children with a disability. However, the lack of access will always inhibit the service from achieving top marks. The service is located over two levels with no lift access, therefore it is not accessible to certain types of abilities

Under the sub- heading, Activities, the room was tested under the nine different items and statements identified in table 32 and 33 below. The average baseline for activities in the Pre-school room was 3 with a retest average of 3.8. In the Infant Room the baseline average was 4.3 with a re-test average of 5.1.

There is also the heading for use of TV video and computer under the activity sub-heading the area is marked N/A on all the services score sheet as the services do not use TV Video and computers. By marking N/A it has no impact on the overall score.

The Sub Scale of Language and Reasoning scored low achieving minimal (2.7). This was the rating achieved both pre and post intervention. There were books available for the children but reading was not something that was observed being encouraged at no stage during the observation were children seen engaging with books either on their own or with and adult. Opportunities for language development were missed. For example, the early years' education professionals missed opportunities to talk about logical relationships with the materials they were engaging with.

ECERS has slightly different activities to the ITERS on the rating scales with the inclusion of active physical play for the infants and maths and numbers for the pre-school rooms. The pre-school rooms scored lower than the infant room under this activity with Fine motor and Dramatic play scoring the highest.

ACTIVITIES - ECERS

B=baseline R =Retest	B	R		B	R		B	R
Fine Motor	5	5	Blocks	4	5	Nature Science	4. 5	4
Art	1	4	Sand/Water	.5	4	Maths/Number	5. 5	4
Music/Movement	1	3	Dramatic Plan	4. 5	4	Promoting acceptance of diversity	1	1

Table 32 Service B Intervention ECERS Activities

ACTIVITIES - ITERS

B=baseline R =Retest	B	R		B	R		B	R
Fine Motor	6	6	Music and Movement	4	4	Sand/Water	6	7
Active physical play	5	5	Blocks	6	6	Nature /Science	1	3

Art	4	4	Dramatic Plan	5	6	Promoting acceptance of diversity	2	3
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Table 33 Service B Intervention ITERS Activities

4.2.2.2.5 Intervention scores

Based on the findings of the pre-intervention observation the services were offered four, one and a half hour interventions on the following topics. Table 34

- Workshop One was an Introduction to Aistear, this was Self selected
- – Rating 1 in ECERS 4 in ITERS
- Workshop Three was two subjects combine 1) Music Movement - Rating 1 in ECERS and 4 in ITERS. Part two was partnership with Parents: rating 4 in ECERS and 2 in ITERS
- Workshop Four Language enrichment – Rating 3.3 ECERS and 2.7 in ITERS
- Workshop Five Equality and Diversity- Rating 1 In ECERS and 2 in ITERS

WORKSHOP and AREA	Pre-Rating	Post-Rating	Pre-Rating	Post-Rating
	ECERS		ITERS	
Workshop One was an Introduction to Aistear				
Workshops Two Art	1	4	4	4
Workshop Three was two subjects combine 1) Music Movement	1	3	4	4
Workshop Four Language enrichment	3.3	4.5	2.7	2.7
Workshop Five Equality and Diversity	1	1	2	2

Table 34 Service B Intervention pre-and-post workshop

Not all the areas where workshops were created saw an increase in rating. There was no theme or pattern from the five workshops in service B. Art increased for the pre-

school rooms but remained the same in the ITERS room. The ECERS Language and reasoning/talking moved from an average of 3.3 to 4.5, while again it stayed the same for the ITERS. The service had a poor attendance with only four out of the eight attending. Two of the participants worked in the Pre-school room, one with the infants and the fourth was the service floater. The manager did not attend any of the sessions.

4.2.2.3 Service C – (Withdrawn)

The service was observed on 16th September 2013. There are four rooms and ten team members.

Overall the service scored 4 which would be ranked halfway between minimal and good. This service was to receive the interventions but the participants decided to withdraw from the study just before the first scheduled intervention. Prior to withdraw the service had agreed to four workshops on each of the areas under Activities and one on Language and talking/reasoning.

The service stated their reason for the withdrawal was the commitment involved in the study. Some of the team had already signed up to do their National Qualifications Authority Ireland (NQAI) Level 6 in Childcare and felt it would be too much for them others cited personal reasons.

Sub Scales	ECERS Baseline
Space and Furnishings	5.3
Personal Care Routines	3.9
Language and Reasoning/Talking	3.7
Activities	2.8
Interaction	4.4
Programme Structure	4.4
Parents and Staff	3.7

Table 35 Service C ECERS Baseline (Withdrawn)

The highest scores were achieved indicated by the results is in under the sub-heading Space and Furnishings, which had an average score of 5.3. This score is between good and excellent. There are things that the service could not score on, therefore could never have achieved excellent (7). For example, none of the windows in the service have blinds or any other cover mechanism to cover the windows. Under rubric 7 in 'indoor space' statement 7.1 reads "*Natural light can be controlled*" (Harms et al. 2005:10 This stopped all rooms achieving top marks for indoor space.

The ratings for Activities are identified in Table 35 Service C Withdrawn ECERS Activities and Table 35 Service C Withdrawn ITERS Activities The pre-school room average rating was 2.7 with the toddler room achieving a rating of 3. TV video and computer are marked N/A as before.

The pre-school rooms have slightly different activities to the infant rooms with the inclusion of active physical play for the infants and maths and numbers for the pre-school rooms.

Activities - ECERS

Fine Motor	5	Blocks	2.	Nature Science	1.
			5		5
Art	2	Sand/Water	2.	Maths/Number	3.
			5		5
Music/Movement	.	Dramatic	5	Promoting acceptance of	2.
	5	Plan		diversity	5

Table 36 Service C ECERS Activities (withdrawn)

Activities -ITERS

Fine Motor	3.	Music and	4	Sand/Water	1
	5	Movement			
Active physical	4.	Blocks	3	Nature /Science	3
play	5				
Art	3	Dramatic Plan	5	Promoting acceptance of	0
				diversity	

Table 37 Service C ITERS Activities (Withdrawn)

4.2.2.3.1 Intervention

Service C had agreed to four workshops before withdrawing. The first one designed for them was on art and the importance of child led art. The team completed a questionnaire on their opinion of art and what happens in the service. The results formed the basis of the workshop.

4.2.2.3.2 Service D Intervention Group

The service was observed in September 2013 with the re-test 21 months later in June 2015. This is a sessional service with a Montessori Curriculum within the Aistear framework. Service D were offered interventions in all of the areas that achieved a score of 3 or less. There are four rooms and five team members. The service scored 3.5 which indicates that the quality of provision is minimal. The full results are presented in table 23

Sub Scales	ECERS Baseline	ECERS Re-Test
Space and Furnishings	4.3	4.5
Personal Care Routines	5.6	4.2
Language and Reasoning	3.8	5.5
Activities	1.8	4.1
Interaction	5.4	4.8
Programme Structure	1.3	4.5
Parents and Staff	3	4.3
Total	3	4.5

Table 38 Service D Sub Scale Score

The service achieved a pre-intervention ECERS rating of 3.5 which is ranked half way between minimal (3) and good (5). The post-intervention indicates an improvement of .9 to 4.5 which is still below good. The results under the seven sub scales are presented

in Table 37 Service D Sub Scale score. Five of the sub-headings achieved an increase with two decreasing.

The scores indicate that the services interactions achieved between good and excellent with a score of 5.4. This service operates a Montessori curriculum so some of the activities were limited and did not form part of the curriculum in the Montessori room. For example, sand and water play were not available and the art was an adult led activity with no materials accessible to the children for free choice. This was indicated by the results with the service achieving 1.5 for their programme structure. The schedule was very rigid and embedded in the Montessori method. Children went into the Montessori classroom where time was structured to individual work, new work with the Montessori teacher. The children were reminded to be quiet and work in silence. When a child chose a piece of equipment they had not yet been shown, they were told to put it back and then encouraged to take something they were familiar with. Downstairs in the free play session it was chaotic, children's access to equipment and materials was limited. There was open floor space with not much available the children engaged in gross motor activities, that seemed to cause the room leader some stress. In both rooms, it was observed the children had no choice in their play as most of it was adult initiated and adult led. The children were ready for collection for 10 minutes prior to the end of the 3hr session.

Under the heading of Activities, the room was tested under the different headings see Table 40 Service D Intervention Activities The pre-intervention average under activities was 2.08 with a re-test average of 4.1

ACTIVITIES - ECERS

B=baseline R =Retest	B	R		B	R		B	R
Fine Motor	6	6	Blocks	0	4	Nature Science	2	7
Art	0	1	Sand/Water	0	4	Maths/Number	0	4

Music/Movement	4	6	Dramatic Plan	2	1	Promoting acceptance of diversity	2	4
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Table 39 Services D Intervention Activities

As with the other services the use of TV video and computer are not used and therefore marked as N/A. By completing it as N/A ensures the uncompleted area will not impact on the rating.

4.2.2.3.3 The Intervention

The service has got scope to do more creative activities, but tends to do more structured work that is adult led. Following the observation, it was recommended that the service receive the intervention workshops on Art, Music/Movement, Sand/Water and Dramatic Play as all scored below 3, which is between minimal and good. The service team recognised they had several areas they would like to work so it was agreed that they would receive support on the following topics shown in table

WORKSHOP and AREA	Pre-Rating	Post- Rating
	ECERS	
Workshop One Activities	1.8	4.1
Workshops Two Positive Behaviour		
Workshop Three Policies and Procedures		
Workshop Four Environments	4.3	4.5
Workshop Five Programme Structure	1.3	4.8

Table 40 Service D Intervention Ratings

4.2.3 The rating scale Activities summary

Upon analysis of each individual service's rating, a theme of low ratings was emerging under the sub-heading of Activities and Language and Reasoning. Table 40 is a list of the areas under Activities and each service's (A-F) pre-intervention and post-intervention score. These are indicated by the letters B and R. B = pre-intervention

and R= post-intervention. All the services achieved a good (5) on fine motor skills with the exception of service E where the rating achieved was 4. Services A and E were the only services where there was a change, Service A decreased to 4 from 6, while service E increased from 4 to 5. The lowest scoring activity was Sand/Water. The scale requires the sand and water to be available at least twice a week for a minimum of 30minutes. This statement is under rubric 3 “3.1 Some provision for sand or water play accessible either outdoors or indoors” (Harms et al. 2005:46)

KEY; Non colour = Rating of 4 **Green** = rating of greater than 4 **Pink** = rating less than 4

Sub - Heading	Areas	A		E		F		B				D	
		B	R	B	R	B	R	B I	R 1	B 2	R 2	B	R
Activities	19.Fine motor	6	4	4	5	6	6	5	5	5	5	6	6
	20.Art	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	6	1	3	0	1
	21.Music/movement	3	2	3	2	3	3	1	4	1	4	4	6
	22.Blocks	4	4	3	3	2	2	4	2	4	5	0	4
	23.Sand/water	2	2	3	4	3	6	0	4	1	4	0	4
	24.Dramatic play	5	5	5	4	2	2	4	4	5	4	2	1
	25.Nature/Science	4	4	3	1	6	6	2	4	7	4	2	7
	26.Math/Number	7	7	3	3	6	6	5	4	6	4	0	4
	27.Use of TV, video and /or computers	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	\
	28.Promoting acceptance of diversity	3	3	4	4	4	4	1	1	1	2	2	4

Table 41 Individual Service Score under the Sub-Scale Activities

4.2.3.1 The interventions

All services participating in the research received feedback on their ratings. The participants were shown the statements where they did not receive credit. The

interventions that were provided to two services, Service B and Service D, each with varying results. Both services achieved an overall increase.

Service	Pre- Intervention	Post- Intervention	Pre- Intervention	Post- Intervention
	ECERS		ITERS	
B	4.1	4.8	4.5	4.8
D	3	4.5		

Table 42 Intervention Services Pre-and -post Intervention scores

The areas chosen for intervention were areas where a service had achieved a rating of 3 or less. The interventions were designed for each individual service. For example, information was gathered from each participant through a short questionnaire for the Art and the Policies and Procedure workshops. See Appendix V- *The Presentations*. This data informed the content of the workshops by having specific information on what each person thought within the service and how it could be addressed.

The workshops were run over the month of June 2014. Team members attending in the evening after work. Service D had full attendance from its team members and included the manager. Service B had four of their eight team members attended, the owner manger never attended. Each workshop was designed to be an hour and half in length. The workshops contained some information from the rating scales also included information on current research and had a practical element to them. See sample session plan Appendix IX – *Sample Lesson Plan*

4.2.4 ECERS and ITERS summary

In total five services completed the process. Two in receipt of pre-intervention observation, intervention and post intervention observation. The remaining three were in the control group, they received pre and post intervention observations. All services received information on their ratings, with two receiving agreed interventions.

Following the post -intervention observation four of the services achieved an increase with only one indicating a decrease. The services that were in receipt of the intervention achieved the greatest increases. Service B achieved an increase of .7 for ECERS and .3 for ITES while Service D achieved an increase of 1.5.

4.3 THE QUESTIONNAIRE

As to yield a profile and insight into the early years' personnel who participated a questionnaire administered at the start of the study. Information is gathered on the profile of the early years' sector by national agencies such as Pobal and Early Childhood Ireland (ECI) annually. It was important for this research to have its own profile of the sector, it also permitted a comparison with the national profile of the early year's sector to see if the findings were similar.

As outlined in Chapter three - the methodology, the questionnaire contained 13 questions and was distributed to all of the participants in the study see appendix XIV. In total 54 questionnaires were distributed to six Services. 31 were completed and returned resulting in a response rate of 57.4%. Not all questions were answered by all the respondents. For clarity, each of the individual question will indicate the percentage response rate for that question.

4.3.1 Personal

The personal information of the respondents as identified in the results are shown in Table 43 Profile of Early Years Education Professionals.

<i>Gender</i>	100% Female	
<i>AVERAGE AGE</i>	38 years	
	<i>AGE RANGE</i>	28 -59
<i>PARENTS</i>	67.7%	
	<i>Adult Children</i>	43%

	<i>Under 20yrs</i>	9%
	Under 15yrs	18%
	Under 10yrs	14%
	<i>Under 5yrs</i>	16%

Table 43 Profile of Early Years Education Professionals

4.3.2 Current Employment

The questionnaire set out to identify the participants' current employment status within the early years' education services. 90% of the respondents answered the question which asked how long they are with their current employer. The range was from one year to 20 years with an average of 5.2 years. The majority of respondents were in full time employment, see table 44. Full time is anything above 41 hours, part-time is to a maximum of 18 hours and sessional is 25 hours or work.

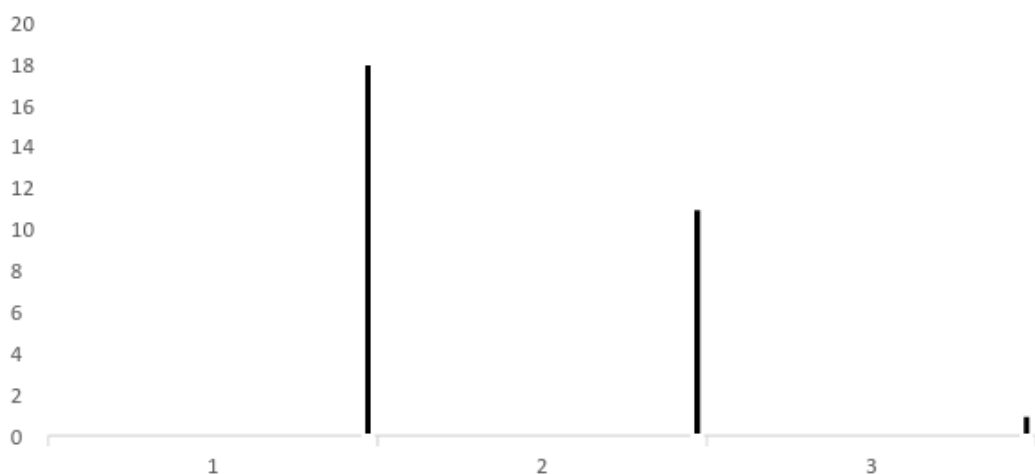


Table 44 Employment Status of early years' professionals

4.3.2.1 Salary Levels

80% of those surveyed responded to the question in relation to their earnings. The majority of the sample is paid between €10,000 and €15,000 per annum. 8% earned

above €30,000 with one manager earning above €35,000. This manger was employed in one of the community services. None of the respondents earned over €40,000 per year.

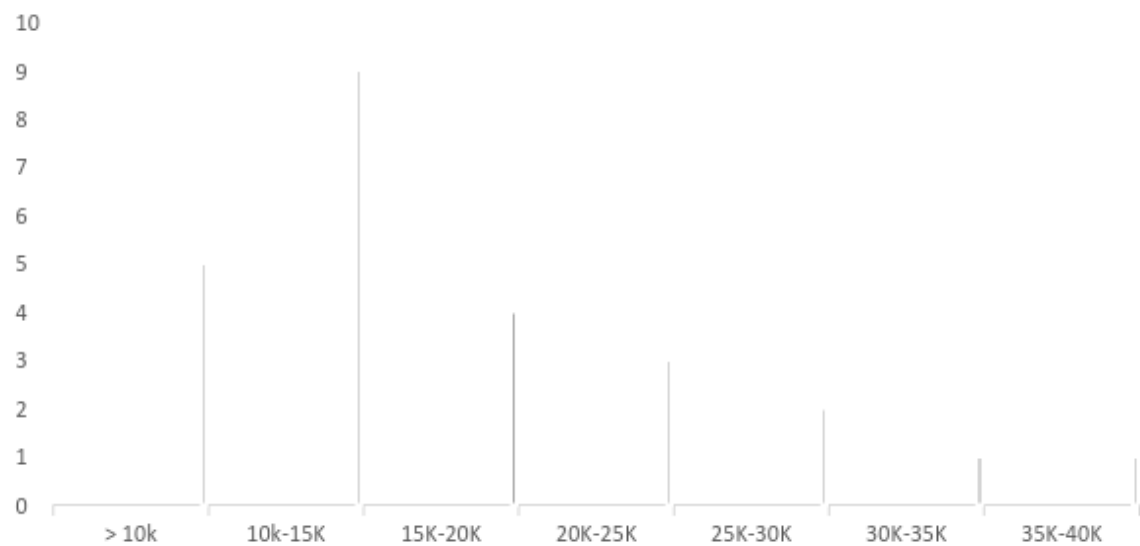


Table 45 Respondents Average Income

4.3.2.2 Annual Leave and Terms and Conditions

In relation to annual leave, 58% responded the minimum number of days’ annual leave was 10 and the maximum is 40 with an average of 24 days. 80% of the respondents did not complete additional terms and conditions. Of those that responded, 6% said they had no additional terms and conditions, 12% indicated that they had sick days as additional terms and conditions. There was no indication if this was paid or unpaid sick leave. Other comments included that they could have their place of work changed as they worked between two services owned and managed by the same person. One respondent has term time, she takes time off when the schools are closed and her salary was paid accordingly.

4.3.3 Childcare Qualifications

The respondents were asked about their level of childcare qualifications. The response rate to this question was 96%. 86% had obtained leaving certificate level with 46% of

them achieving honours. The breakdown of the level of childcare qualification is displayed in Table 46.

Level 5 Childcare	Level 6 in Childcare	Level 5 and 6 in Childcare	Degree in Early years' education	Level 5,6 and Degree	Diploma in Nursery Management
70%	48%	38%	9%	3%	3%

Table 46 Respondents Childcare Qualifications

Level 5 and 6 childcare training was all achieved from local institutes including Education Training Boards (ETB's) and private run training centres. None of the respondents had a university qualification or indicated that they were engaged in a programme of study. The early years' education degrees were obtained from Institutes of Technology in Carlow, Dundalk and Dublin. The respondents were also asked about any additional training that supports their work in the early years' education that they may have under taken. These were in the form of workshops, short training courses. First Aid is the most attended course with 58% respondents followed by manual handling at 54% and child protection at 41.9%. A full list of responses is provided in table 47.



Table 47 Respondents Additional Training

4.3.3.1 Qualifications in other disciplines

Respondents were asked to identify other qualifications they had acquired that were not in childcare. 70% responded, with 40% indicating that they had qualifications in other disciplines. 77% of the qualifications were at further level with 22% a higher-level, level 7 plus on the National Qualifications Authority Ireland framework. The most popular training was in Health Care at 33.3% followed by a business qualification with 22%.

4.3.4 Experience

Respondents were asked to provide information on their experience working in early years' education settings including how long they worked in early years' education, the age range of children and the types of services they have worked in. There was a response rate of 93% for this question. Their experience ranged from 1 year to 21 years indicating a wide range of experience across the sample.

Table 48 Respondents experience with the different age groups, outlines the age and type of group respondents were employed with. It should be noted that in full day cares early years' education professionals can be employed to work with different age groups to provide cover over the day.

AGE GROUPS EMPLOYED TO WORK WITH					
One age group		More than one age group	3 or more age ranges		
53%		33%	6.6%		
PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WORKING WITH CHILDREN IN THE DIFFERENT AGE RANGES					
0-1yrs	1-2yrs	2-3yrs	3-5yrs	5Yrs +	Service Floater
17%	17%	24%	24%	9%	9%

Table 48 Respondents experience with the different age groups

The results indicate that 73% of the respondents currently work in full day care with the remaining 26% working in sessional services. Responses indicate that the majority of the experience is with the pre-school age group with an average of four years. The average of years' experience for working with school aged children is two years. Overall respondents gained their experience in Full Day Care and sessional services. In relation to care in the home there are the two types, Childminding, which is where the child goes to the carer's house and a carer who comes into the child's home. The responses indicated that the number of those gaining experience as a carer in a child's home was slightly higher than those who childminded. with the number of respondents working in the child's home being slightly higher than those who were childminders.

4.3.5 Practice

4.3.5.1 Job Title

As no agreed specific titles currently exist for early years' education personnel. The questionnaire asked the participants to identify what their title was. The response rate was 74 %. Results indicated that Montessori Teacher or Room Leader were the most popular. Table 49 Respondents professional title provides an overview of all the responses.

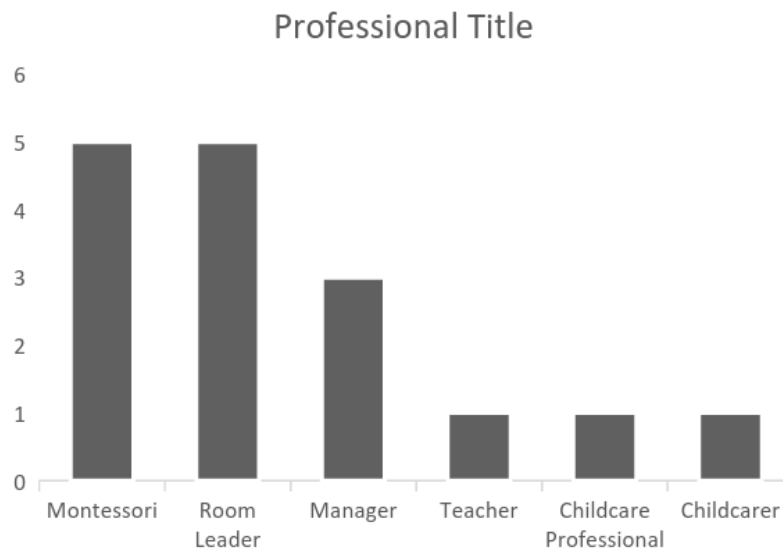


Table 49 Respondents professional title

4.3.5.2 Planning

The questionnaire probed participant's view on their practice and planning of activities and curriculum. Planning is considered to be part of the early years' curriculum and this question set out to identify if services plan the activities in their services. There was a 90% response rate. 92.8% of respondents indicated that they planned the children's activities with 7.2% saying they did not. The managers of all the services marked this question N/A. The responses indicated that the plan is designed by the room leader or that they use a planned environment and pre-formatted curriculum such as Montessori. (Montessori 1965)

4.3.5.2.1 Frequency of Planning

In terms of how often the planning takes place participants were given five choices the results are presented in Figure 8 Frequency of planning among respondents

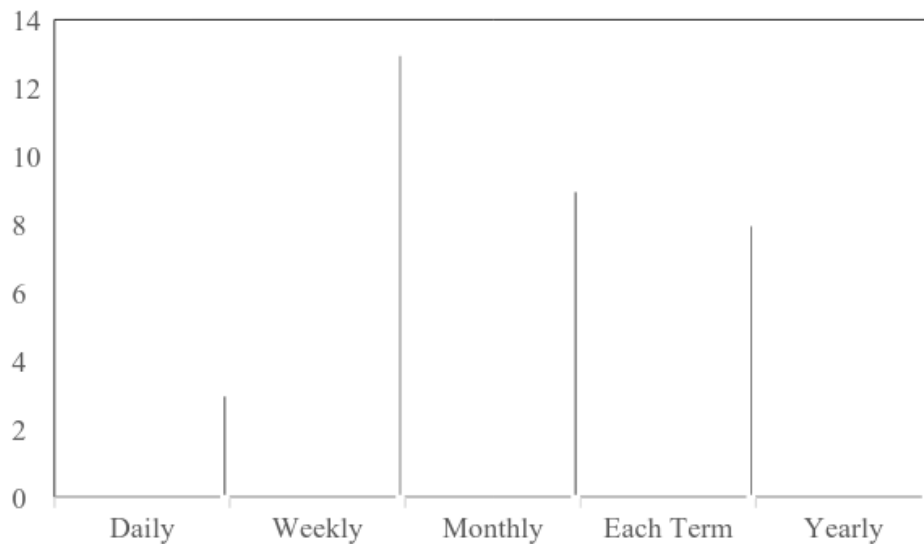


Table 50 Frequency of planning among respondents

While the results show that weekly is the most popular frequency for planning, it would be incorrect to say that weekly is the preferred option. The respondents that identified weekly came from one service who had the highest number of respondents. There was consistency to the responses from the teams within each of the six services. One of the service pairings, despite having the same owner manager did not complete planning in the same way, as individual services their approach was different. The other service who had the same owner/manager had identical planning processes.

4.3.5.2.2 Who is responsible for planning and reviewing it?

In relation to identifying who did the planning there was more than one option available. There was a 70% response rate. The results indicate that room leaders were identified as the predominant person involved in planning and are shown in table 51. The column on the left (black) indicates who does the planning, the column on the right (Grey) indicates who reviews the plan.

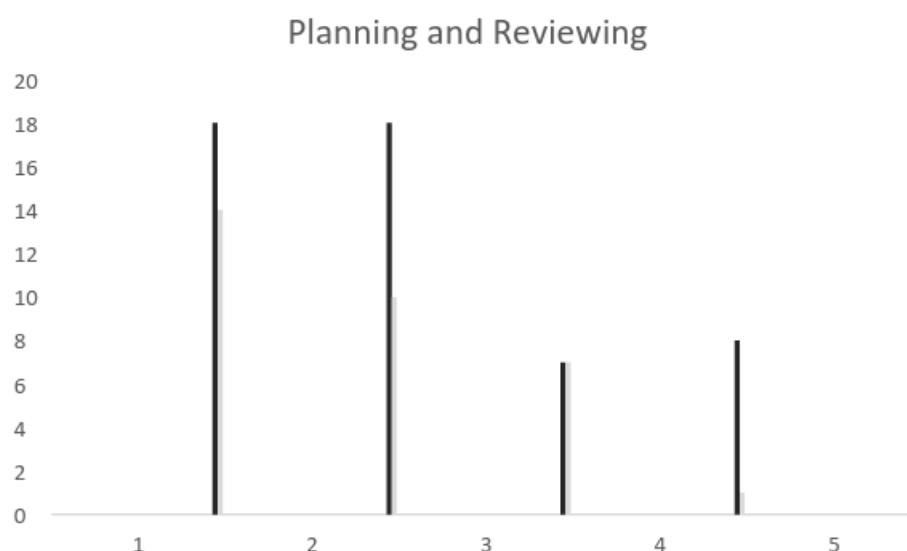


Table 51 Who completed the curriculum plan and review

4.3.5.2.3 Supports used to plan

Respondents were asked to indicate what supports they use when completing their planning. The response rate was 48%. Table 52 identified Planning Supports indicates that Aistear (NCCA 2009) and Síolta (CECDE 2006) are the supports used most often. The respondents were predominately influenced by current events such as child interests or the weather, for example if the weather was good, they would go outside, the activities that were planned for that day/week may not happen as the children were brought outside to play, which from the observations carried out was predominantly gross motor play.

<i>Planning Tools</i>	
<i>Plan Reviewed</i>	Aistear/Síolta 50%
	use the internet 25%
	Observations. 16%
	69%
	<i>Not sticking to the plan response rate 87%</i>
	Children interests/needs 58%

stated they were influenced by the weather	53%
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Table 52 Identified Planning Supports

4.3.5.3 *Síolta and Aistear Frameworks*

The respondents were asked to identify if they knew about Síolta and Aistear through a range of statements as indicated in table 53 Respondents to Síolta (the blue colour) and Aistear (the light blue) questions. 97% of the respondents answered the question in relation to the two national frameworks for quality (Síolta) and curriculum (Aistear) with 100% stating they had heard of Síolta with 97% stating they had heard of Aistear.

The respondents were then given a list of statements in relation to Síolta and Aistear and asked to tick all that applied. There was a 5% non-response rate to this question. 26% felt competent in the use of the frameworks in the practice while 56% apply Aistear and 50% apply Síolta to their practice.

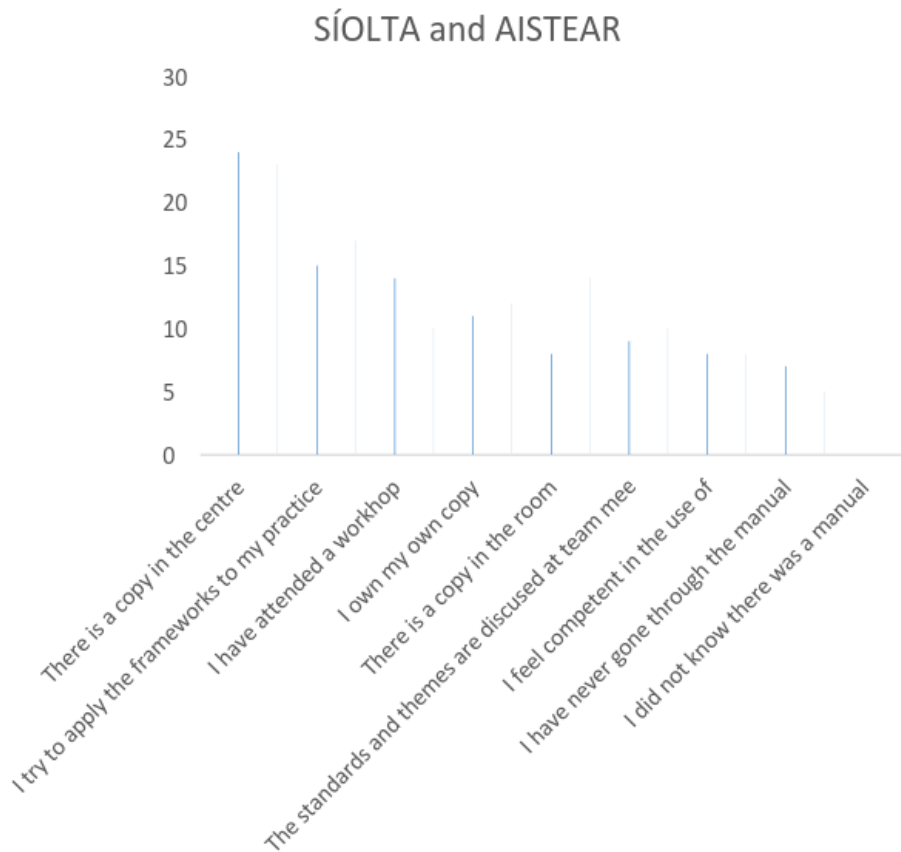


Table 53 Response to Síolta, Aistear question

The Aistear Framework identifies “four sets of guidelines, focusing on different aspects of pedagogy” (NCCA 2009:5). these four guidelines describe good practice in the Aistear Manual.

- Partnership with parents is the first one, which recognises the value and the importance of the relationship between the parent and the early years’ education service provider. The second guideline is Interactions and these interactions can be between Adult and Child or Child and Child, to impact on quality the interactions must be positive. (NCCA 2009).
- Play is also a guideline and the importance of the child’s play to their development is explained.
- Lastly is the guide of assessment and how in order to progress children’s learning assessment needs to be used as a tool of support (NCCA 2009).

The respondents were asked to rate them in relation to their everyday practice within the service, allowing them to give the same rating to more than one. 97% responded as follows;



Table 54 Aistear Guidelines for quality practice

Table 54 identifies that Partnership with Parents ranked as having the greatest importance with 67% of respondents identifying it as essential. Assessment received

the lowest with only 40% identifying it as essential. Perhaps the most significant finding is 13% identifying Play as Not Important only followed by Assessments at 7%.

4.3.6 Qualitative Responses.

The questionnaire then introduced a qualitative part to the questions, to elicit opinion on the rationale for the participant's responses.

4.3.6.1 Do you achieve what you want in your practice?

Respondents were asked if they achieved all they wanted in their practice. Having answered on the formal planning, this was an opportunity for participants to add anything they wanted or say something that perhaps the more structured questions did not allow for. There was a high percentage of non-responses for this question at 32%. Of those who responded the split was close with 43% indicating they did achieve all they wanted to in their practice while 57% stating no they did not achieve all they wanted to.

The respondents were asked to explain their answer. 90% of those who answered the question provided an explanation. There were two main responses one at 35 % who put it down to insufficient materials or equipment available to them to carry out all the activities they wanted. 25% identified time as their barrier to achieving all they wanted in their practice.

To achieve a sense of what early years' education providers felt about their practice and their role the following five questions were asked.

4.3.6.2 Influencing children in your care

Respondents were asked "Do you think you influence the children in your care"? There were two parts to this question. The first part was a simple yes or no followed by an explanation request. 87% of respondents answered this question with 100% stating that yes, they did think they influenced the children in their care. Responses included that children learn by example, they are role models and that they recognise that they need good relationships to have good interactions. They recognise that in their role as

early years' education provider's they supported the children to develop and achieve their full potential.

4.3.6.3 Did you always want to work in early years' education?

Respondents were asked if they always wanted to work in childcare, and there was a 93% response rate, with 58% of them saying yes they did. Of those who explained why they did, 33% stated they became interested when they had their own children and 16% enjoyed a course they completed in childcare.

4.3.6.4 Long Term Goals

The respondents were asked about their long-term career goals. Responses indicated that progressing their education was considered to be the most important (41%), while 31% identified they had a career goal within the early years' education. For example, room leader, Montessori teacher or a managerial position. 23% indicated that their career goal was to move into Primary or Third level teaching. With the remaining 13% indicating that they want to open their own business and 4% want to work in an early years' education organisation.

4.3.6.5 Valued as an Early Years Education Professional

Respondents were asked if they felt valued as an early year professional and to identify who valued them. The question provided six options for them to tick. 87% answered this question. Of the six options, the highest-ranking one was stating they valued themselves as professionals at 85%, 74% stated that they felt valued by their employer with the percentage falling to 18.5% for feeling valued by the wider society.

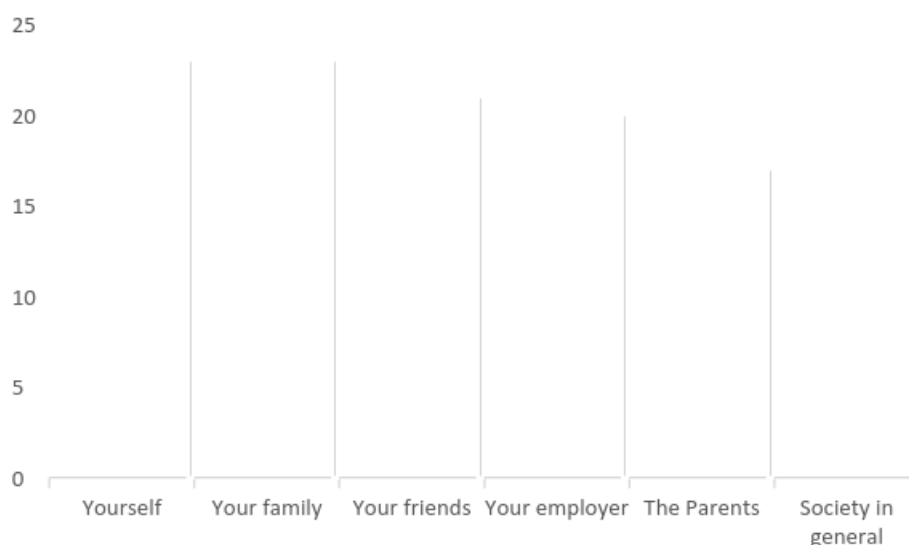


Table 55 Who respondents feel valued by,

4.3.6.6 Opinion on their own school Experience

The purpose of this question was to identify if their own experiences influenced their opinion on education in anyway, i.e. positive, negative, neutral, therefore it asked about their own experience in school and was it positive or negative. The respondents were asked if they liked school and the reason for their response. 6.5% did not answer this question, with respondent CCRO2P14 answering both yes and no as their answer. Overall the respondents had positive experience in their own schooling. The second part of the question asked if they felt that their teachers had influenced them. see fig 13 Respondents own school experience below.

Did you like school		
	Yes	70%
	No	30%
Reasons for liking school		
	Subject	23%
	Friends	14%
Reasons for Not liking school		
	Study /Homework	33%
Teachers Influence		
	Yes	88.5%
	No	11.5 %
Education V's Experience		

	Equal	61.5%
	Education	27%
	Experience	11.5%

Table 56 Respondents own school experience

4.3.6.7 Personal traits

The final question asked the respondents to describe themselves in terms of their own personal traits. The responses are outlined in Table 57 Respondents Own Personal Traits below. The majority of the respondents described themselves as a ‘people person’ and ‘hardworking’.



Table 57 Respondents own personal traits

4.3.7 Summary of Questionnaire Findings

The Questionnaire was used as a method to gain quantitative data in a number of areas including the participant’s profile, qualifications, practice in the early years’ education service and how they feel valued by society.

The results indicated that the profile of the respondents is one that is comparative to national data gathered by Pobal (2015) in their annual beneficiary survey. The sector is predominantly female the results indicate that 100% of the participants were female. Both Pobal (2015) and Early Childhood Ireland (ECI) (2012) have information on salaries indicating that they are low and the status of the sector is low, this was also reflected in the questionnaires findings, with the results indicating that only 17% stated they felt valued by society.

The results indicate that the training qualifications are also in line with the national data with 70% of the participants stating they had achieved a level 5 quantification in Childcare.

Environment is one of the key aspects to a quality service and how you plan the activities that go on within the environment. In the questionnaire, the respondents were asked what they used to help them plan, the responses indicated that items such as Aistear, Síolta with observations only made up 16% of the responses. When asked, what were the barriers to their work the results indicated a lack of materials, this would correlate with the information obtained in the pre-intervention observations. Under the Sub Scales of activities one of the main issues was availability and access.

The participants were committed to the sector with only 23% seeing progression out of the sector, the remaining respondents identified a career path in owner management or one of the support agencies for the early years' education. They value the education process and see their role of one of influence. In terms of their own development they majority (61.5%) gave equal influencing to education and experience.

4.4 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

The document analysis was conducted. The documents identified in the methodology that were common to all six early years' education services, their pre-school inspection reports and their policies and procedures were analysed. The purpose of the analysis was to provide further information on the operation of each of the individual services and pertains to information that cannot be obtained during an observation. For example, under the ECERS sub-heading of safety practices 3.3 states "*Essentials needed to handle emergencies available*" (Harms et al. 2005:32). The regulation inspection report will identify if the service has the right equipment in the First Aid box and if there are trained members of the team to perform first aid should it be required. The Policy and Procedure will identify what should happen in an emergency situation, enabling team members to act appropriately. These documents were crucial to permit a comparison in the areas where there is cross over between the rating scale and the formal documents.

Currently the only legislation specific to early years' education is the 2016 Pre-school Regulations (HSE 2016). Services must comply with the Pre-school Regulations and as part of this compliancy a comprehensive set of policies and procedures must exist. As the services are employers they must provide all of necessary documentation for their employees.

- a) Pre-school inspection reports.
- b) Policies and Procedures.

4.4.1 The Pre-school Inspection Reports

The inspection reports were across two jurisdictions of the HSE. Each geographical jurisdiction has its own pre-school inspection team (HSE 2016). (the HSE is broken down into areas for management purposes and then into smaller teams in their own jurisdictions). The services in this study were in the one HSE area/region, however as they were not in the same jurisdictions. Therefore, two different inspection teams of the HSE completed the reports, two from one jurisdiction with four from the other. The inspections were conducted under the 2006 Pre-school Regulations (HSE 2006). In 2016 these regulations were amended; however, they were not finalised at the time of the research and none of the services had received an inspection under them.

The results of the review of the regulations for each Service are laid out below. The regulations are categorised and presented as they appear on the feedback to the services following an inspection. There are five categories in total. 1) Information, 2) Management and Staffing, 3) Health, Welfare and Child Development, 4) Premises and Facilities and 5) Information on Safety Measures.

Between the six services there were 104 compliances with 40 non- compliances. Table 58 identifies the breakdown for the overall sample in the study. Service C had no non-compliances, service A had the least amount with five non-compliances. Services D and F had the highest at 10 each. Figure 15 gives the breakdown in each of the areas. For a full breakdown of each regulation see appendix seven.

Compliance Key: C = Compliant

N= No Compliant

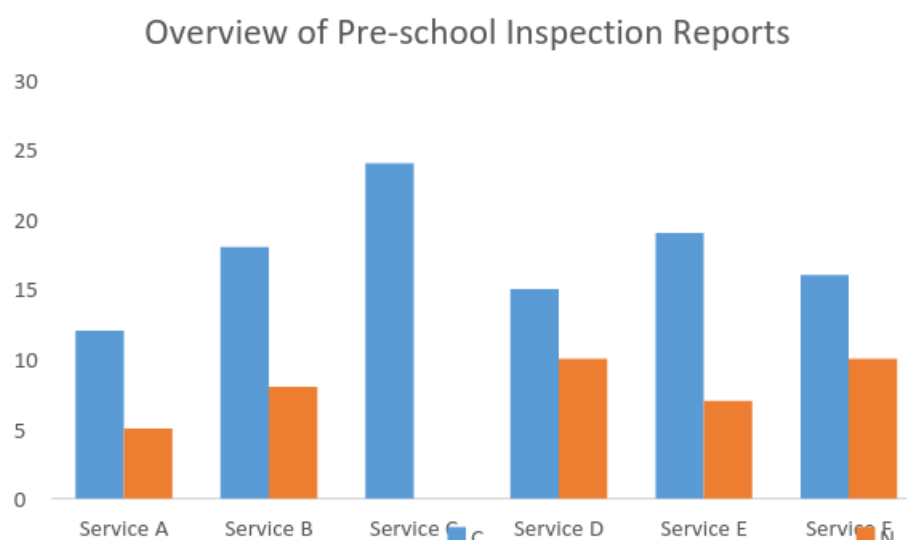


Table 58 Overview of Pre-school Inspection Reports

The categories of Inspection

	Information Three Regulations 10, 11 and 31	Managemen t & Staffing One Regulation; 8	Health, Welfare and Child Development Two Regulations; 5 and 9	Premises and facilities Nine Regulation s 18-25 and 28	Information on Safety Measures. Four Regulations; 6,7,16 and 27
Service					
A	C X 3	C X 0	C X 2	C X 7	C X 2
B	C X 3	C X 0	C X 2	C X 5	C X 3
C	C X 3	C X 1	C X 2	C X 9	C X 4
D	C X 2	C X 0	C X 1	C X 6	C X 1
E	C X 1	C X 0	C X 1	C X 9	C X 4
F	C X 2	C X 0	C X 2	C X 6	C X 2

Table 59 The Categories of Inspection

4.4.2 Policies and Procedures

The second set of documents that was reviewed was the service policies and procedures. Every early years' education services are expected to meet their legal requirements and have a set of comprehensive policies and procedures.

Pre-school's fall under several pieces of legislation. The main piece of legislation is the Pre-school Regulation 2016 of the 2001 Childcare Act. (HSE 2016) The services must also comply with Employment Legislation for full listing see Appendix II, Health and Safety Legislation (Dept. of Health 2005) and Food Safety (Food Safety Authority 1998). Therefore, early years' education services must have policies and procedures in all of these areas.

For the purpose of this study each service provided a copy of their Policies and Procedures. A comparison of the documents was completed across all the services copies (N=6). The purpose of this was to identify where services had similar policies. Table 48 Common Policies Across Service, identifies that the services had 18 common policies from the documents provided. The information is presented in three tables

1. Table 60 Identifies the policies that were common to all and clearly linked to the Pre-school Regulations 2006
2. Table 61 Identifies policies that were present in only one service and were clearly linked to the Pre-school Regulations 2006
3. Table 62 Identifies policies that were present in only one service but there was no clear link to the Pre-school Regulations 2006.

Information	Management & Staffing	Health, Welfare and Child Development	Premises and facilities	Information on Safety Measures.
	Accidents and Incidents	Behaviour	Health and Hygiene	Fire safety
	Admissions	Encouraging Positive behaviour	Settling In	Sun Screen
	Child Protection	Outdoor play	Personal Care	
	Complaints			
	Confidentiality			
	Fee's and opening hours			
	Induction			
	Partnership with Parents			
	Students			

Table 60 Common Policies across the six services

Table 61 Identified Policy in one of the participating services contains a list of individual policies identified by only one service. All the policies had a clear link to one of the Pre-school Regulations but were not common to all services. It should be noted that some of the policies had similar names and contained similar information.

Information	Management & Staffing	Health, Welfare and Child Development	Premises and facilities	Information on Safety Measures.
	Absence Cover	Child Development	Resting/Sleep	Illness
	Collections and Arrivals	Curriculum	Nappy Changing	Immunisation
	Record Keeping	Physical Play	Handwashing	Infection Control
	Emergency Closure	Children’s Charter		Illness/Vaccines/ Exclusions
	Supervision of Children	Planning and Evaluation		Outings
	Staff Ratios	Biting		Security
	Recruitment			Spillages /Hazards
	Garda Vetting			Afterschool Meal Times
	Volunteer Recruitment			Bottle Preparation
	Anaphylaxis			First Aid

Table 61 Identified policy in one of the participating services

The policies identified in table 62 below again are ones that were identified by an individual service and not common to all six. The difference with these policies are they are not linked to the Pre-School Regulations 2006. However, the policy maybe required for a variety of reasons specific to a service, or may form part of another policy. For example, CCTV, face painting and Multi Media may be a requirement under the Child Protection Policy. Manual handling should be a policy under Health and Safety as it would be part of a Health and Safety statement. The Safety, Health and Welfare Act 2005 requires a risk assessment, a good risk assessment would identify that as the early year's professionals will be lifting children on a daily basis.

POLICY		
Anti - Bullying	Ethos, Aims	Multi Media
Anti-bias	Face Panting	Respect and Dignity in the work place
Birthdays	Fundraising policy	Soothers
Camera and Photography usage	General Information	Special Needs
Car Parking	Helpful hints	Special Needs/Consideration
CCTV	Irish Language	Working with children Code-Of-Ethics
Data Protection	Manual Handling	
Dress Code	Missing Child	
Environment Care	Mission Statement	

Table 62 Policies identified that may be service specific or form part of a larger policy.

4.5 Comparison: ECERS and ITERS, Pre-School Inspection Reports and Policies and Procedures documents.

The services Pre-school Inspection reports, their Policies and Procedures along with the baseline rating from ECERS and ITERS were compared to identify if there were consistencies between them. Where a service had been found to be non-compliant yet they have a robust policy and procedure in that area it will be noted. Table 63 is a list of where ECERS and the Pre-school Regulation were found to have similarities. The service analysis is then outlined service by service in the next six sections.

ECERS /ITERS		Pre-School Inspection
Sub Scale	Area	Regulation
Space and Furnishings	1.Indoor	Information on Health, Welfare and Development of Child; 5 -
	2.Furniture for care, play and learning	Information on Premises and facilities; 18
	3.Furnishings for relaxations and comfort	Information on Premises and Facilities; 25 - Equipment and Materials
	4.Room arrangement for play	Information on Premises and Facilities; 28 -Facilitates for rest and play

	5.Space and Privacy	Information on Premises and Facilities; 21 - Lighting
Personal Care Routine	10.Meals/Snacks	Information on Premises and Facilities; 22 - Sanitary accommodation Information on Safety Measures; 6 - First Aid
	11.Nap/Rest	
	12.Toileting/Diapering	
	13.Health Practices	
	14.Safety Practices	
Activities	19.Fine motor	Information on Health, Welfare and Development of Child; 5 -
	20.Art	
	21.Music/movement	
	22.Blocks	
	23.Sand/water	
	24.Dramatic play	
	25.Nature/Science	
	26.Math/Number	
	27.Use of TV, video and /or computers	
	28.Promoting acceptance of diversity	
Interaction	29. Supervision of gross motor activities	Information on Health, Welfare and Development of Child; 9 - Behaviour
	30. General supervision of children	
	31. Discipline	
	32. Staff-Child Interactions	
	33. Interactions among children	
Programme Structure	34.Schedule	Information on Health, Welfare and Development of Child; 5 -
	35.Free Play	
	36.Group time	
	37.Provisions for children with disabilities	

Table 63 Areas of similarity in ECERS/ITERS and HSE Pre-school Inspections

4.5.1 Service A- Control Service

According to their pre-school report from 2010 Service A had five non-compliant issues. The baseline ECERS rating indicated that there were 12 areas under the sub-scales with score of 3 or less. Of the 12 only one, furnishings for relaxation, cross references with the Pre-school Regulations. The second non-compliance in the pre-school report was Regulation 25 which address matters on Equipment and Materials. The inspector report found that some of the materials were not clean. The soft area was worn and torn and that the books and jigsaws were in a similar state.

There were two regulations where a non-compliance was reported where the service had a Policy and Procedure on the matter. The first non-compliance reported was under Regulation 8 which address matters on Management and Staffing. The service was found to be non-compliant with staff records. The documents missing were staff references and Garda vetting. The analysis of Service A's policy and procedures indicates that they do have a policy on Garda Vetting. The final non-compliance for Service A indicated by the pre-school inspection report was Regulation 14. This regulation address matters to do with records for the staff, the non-compliances are similar to the records required under Regulation 8 which the Service covers in their policies and procedures Garda Vetting. There service was missing one team member's documents on the day of inspection.

4.5.2 Service B – Intervention Service

According to their pre-school report from 2010 Service B had eight non-compliant issues. The baseline research indicated that there were 14 areas under ITERS with 11 areas under ECERS areas under the sub-headings with score of 3 or less.

Of the 25 ECERS/ITERS areas only one was cross referenced and that was with regulation 25 Premises and Facilities (Equipment and Materials). The first regulation where a non-compliance was indicated by the pre-school inspection report was regulation 8. This regulation address matters regarding information on management and staffing. This is not an area covered by the ECERS or ITERS, so therefore did not show up in the baseline. From reviewing Service B policies, the research identified

that they have a policy on of the non-compliance issues reported of Adult: Child ratio and Garda Vetting.

The score of 0 indicated under ECERS for Service B cross references with Regulation 25 where the service was found non-compliant. It was reported in the inspection report that there were insufficient toys and furnishings in the Montessori room with poorly kept materials in the toddler room. The baseline ITERS scoring did not indicate a lack of equipment or poorly maintained materials. The ECERS baseline indication would be in line with the regulation report, as insufficient soft toys were recorded, and while a score of 5 was recorded under room arrangement it was noted that the areas of interest were insufficient.

The baseline data for Service B records the greatest number of areas achieving 3 or less are in areas that could also come under Regulation 5, the subheadings are Language and Reasoning and Activities. In the inspection report the service has no non-compliance issues under Regulation 5.

4.5.3 Service C – Intervention Service

Service C according their pre-school report from 2013 had no non-compliant issues.

4.5.4 Service D – Intervention Service

The preschool report for Service D from 2012 indicated that they had ten non-compliant issues. The baseline research indicated that there were 18 areas under ECERS sub-headings with score of 3 or less. The ECERS baseline data identified seven of these scores in under the Sub Scale Activities see Table 7. The pre-school inspectors identified in their report under regulation 5 and Regulation 25 that the materials for the children's activities were insufficient, the books that were there were in poor condition and there were insufficient soft furnishings for children who may wish to rest. When this information was compared to the ECERS baseline, the data indicated similar findings. Under the first Sub Scale Space and Furnishings, area No. 3 Furnishings for relaxation scored 0. The rationale for the score was the only soft area observed was three cushions on the window. Sub Scale Space and Furnishings area No. 4 Room arrangement scored 3, the rationale for this score was due to the lack of areas of interest being suitably equipped to receive a higher credit.

4.5.5 Service E- Control Service

The preschool report for Service E from 2012 indicated that they had seven non-compliant issues. The baseline research indicated that there were 14 areas under ECERS sub- headings with score of 3 or less. The Sub- Heading with the greatest number of scores less than three as indicated in the results is Activities. In the Pre-school inspection report under Regulation 5, the issue is that there are insufficient observations, with a request to have one per term per child. Under the sub-heading activities, the results indicated that the materials were not available. Further research could be conducted to see if there is any coloration between the two.

The Pre-school inspectorate report stated that the service had no policy on behaviour and marked them as non- compliant. In the ECERS observation the service achieved a rating of 6 which is between good and excellent.

4.5.6 Service F- Control Service

The preschool report for Service F from 2012 indicated that they had ten non-compliant issues. The baseline research indicated that there were 13 areas under ECERS sub- headings with scores of 3 or less. The sub -heading with the greatest number of scores with 3 or less Activities with 5 of the areas not achieving a score of more than 3. The Pre-school inspection report states that under Regulation 5 it was hard to ascertain the planned activities for the day as the children moved from the Montessori rooms to the play rooms.

In addition, the service was found to be non-compliant under Regulation 9 (Behaviour). Both areas would be addressed under ECERS as Language Reasoning and Interaction which both Sub Scales had scores above 4.

While there is some correlation between the Pre-school Regulation and the ECERS/ITERS baseline data. More research would be required to draw a definitive conclusion. The services were found to be non-compliant in areas where they had identified that they had a policy and procedure. For example, Fire safety is a policy identified by all services yet Service B was marked non-compliant for issues relating to fire.

4.6 THE FOCUS GROUPS

There were three focus groups conducted, one for each of the services who were participating in the intervention. The purpose of the focus groups was to compare the information gathered in the questionnaire and get more in-depth information on practice. The questions in the questionnaire were closed, the focus group provided opportunity for discussion on similar questions. For example, the question on planning and the use of supportive documentation in the process were asked by both questionnaire and focus group. In the questionnaire, the question was closed with an option for more explanation, the focus group probed a little more. This set of information on planning permitted information to be compared.

The research sought to gather as much information as possible about the teams and the questions focused on their practice. It was hoped by doing focus groups with the intervention teams that more qualitative information would be provided and give more depth to the responses in the questionnaire.

One of these groups who participated was service C, the participants from this Service withdrew just before the interventions were due to start.

The focus group had 22 questions in total to be asked, some of these during the process did not get asked as they were covered in responses to other questions. The questions were about their work practices. For full breakdown of responses see Appendix IV *Focus groups questions*

4.6.1 Ice Breaker

The four questions related to their work to find if they liked what they did, what were their main tasks and how they went about doing them. These questions while important permitted questions to be asked to which they could answer with ease and ‘ice breaker’ type of question. See Table 64 -Ice-breaker Questions

1	Do you like what you do?
2	What are the main tasks in the service
3	How do you implement them?
4	What do you think about education in the early years

Table 64 Ice Breaker questions

The responses were all very positive in what they did and how they enjoyed working with the children daily. They saw their role as one of care and education of the children, cleaning duties were also identified as part of their role.

4.6.2 Planning and the Curriculum

The participants were asked eight questions in relation to Curriculum, planning and implementation including the use of the two national frameworks Aistear (2009) and Síolta (2006). See table 65 – Planning and Curriculum Questions

1	Does every room have a curriculum plan?
2	How are the plans designed?
3	Do you have meetings, what does this involve
4	Do you have enough information to input in a meaningful way
5	How is the children's work recorded
6	What is your opinion on the Aistear Themes/Are you able to cover all you need to cover under the themes
7	Do you find it easy enough to include the Aistear themes
8	How do you link to Síolta?

Table 65 Planning Curriculum Questions

All the respondents in the services stated they had a curriculum plan. The planning process for design provided a variety of methods, from those who implemented the Montessori curriculum to those who used templates and engaged with the children to ascertain their interests. Five of the participants worked in Montessori rooms.

One team mentioned that the seasons and events impacted their work 'Mother's Day' and 'Valentines Day'(CBR03P07) were given as examples.

They were then asked about their meetings with each other and if this impacted on their planning process, two services were very clear and indicated that they did while it was through the discussion the third team identified that they did.

The recording of the children's work was something they all did, with two of the teams using notebooks as a way of recording. (CDR02P29)

In relation to Síolta and Aistear, one service was confident that they linked all they did under the appropriate theme (CBM02P04). While the participants identified that they knew about Síolta, the links between the two frameworks was unclear. One participant stated the only thing she remembered about Síolta was the importance of partnership with parents (CBR02P05)

4.6.3 Interactions

Under the theme of interactions there were five questions asked, see table 66- Interactions Questions. They are broken into two sections the first two relate to parents and the final three look at the adult interactions with the children.

1	How do you share the information with parents? (Children's work)
2	How do you share the information with parents? (Síolta /Aistear)
3	How do you communicate with children?
4	Do you think about the messages you are send the children on a daily basis?
5	How would you describe the interactions with children in this service – Positive/ Negative, how is this accomplished?

Table 66 Interaction Questions

The questions in relation to interactions were not asked in sequence. The first question as identified in Table 66 was in relation to the recording of the children's work and how it is shared with the parents. Two of the three services answered this question. The participants who did respond had similar ways, notices boards, displays and children's dairies. One service did state they had a newsletter that was e-mailed out. When asked the same question in relation to Síolta (CECDE 2006) and Aistear (NCCA 2009) the response was similar notice boards, pictures, documentation.

How the adults interact or communicate with the children is something that they feel they do well through good eye contact and getting down to the children's level,

however it is not something that are preoccupied by as it happens naturally every day. (CBR02P04).

The information gathered was used for comparison against the questionnaire and each individual service's policies and procedures all of which fed into the development of the interventions.

4.6.4 Interventions

For the services who were going to be in receipt of the intervention it was proposed that they would receive targeted interventions on topics in areas where they achieved a score less than 4 on the rating scale. Four was chosen because it puts them under half way between minimal and good an intervention would be provided. The services were given individual feedback Appendix – Sample Meeting Report which included a feedback document and a discussion with the team. The areas or topics for intervention were agreed in partnership with the services, making the decision a combination of a score less than 4 and mutual agreement. The interventions took the form of one and half hour workshops on the agreed area/topic. These were designed for the service by the researcher. See table 67 for the breakdown.

Sub – Heading	Service B	Sub -	Service D
Activities	Interventions	Heading	Interventions
	Art	Activities	Activities
	Music, Movement	Space and	Environments
		Furnishings	
	Equality and	Programme	Programme
	Diversity	Structure	Schedule
language -	Language		
Reasoning	Enrichment		
Parents and Staff	Partnership with		
	Parents		
Sub – Heading	Service B Request	Sub - Heading	Service D Request
	Introduction to	Interactions	Promoting Positive
	Aistear		Behaviour
			Policies and
			Procedures

In addition to the agreed interventions, both services requested additional workshops that were not highlighted by the baseline data. Service B requested an Introduction to Aistear. Service D requested Promoting Positive Behaviour. The research indicated that service D achieved a rating of 2 for Discipline which is under the subheading Interaction. Service D achieved a rating of 5.4 under the sub-heading Interaction in the pre-intervention rating. The service did not achieve a higher rating as statement 3.3 under the rubric of 3 in the area of discipline states “3.3 Expectations of behaviour are largely appropriate for age and development level of the children” (Harms et al. 2005:60). On the day which the observations were conducted a range of games were being played with the children, such as musical statues and musical chairs – the children who were out first were asked to stand and watch until the game concluded, when they did not stand still and watch they were reprimanded for their behaviour and put back into a line standing watching.

The intervention workshops were completed over a period of four weeks (i.e. once a week). Service D had full participation with all six team members attending including the manager. Service B had eight participants, but only four attended the workshops excluding the manager.

4.7 SUMMARY

All the data gathered in this study was for purpose of extracting as much information on the early years’ education services, their teams and their daily activities to design and carry out bespoke interventions. To compile this overview the research data was collected through four methods a quality rating scale, questionnaires, document analysis and focus groups. The methods employed were both qualitative and quantitative in their approach.

The chapter outlined the results from each method starting with the rating scale, providing details on each individual service. What the rating scale identified was that four of the five services increased their rating following the intervention with the greatest increases in the two services who received the interventions. The findings of

the rating scale were consistent with the individual services Pre-school Inspection Report. These reports were analysed as part of the document analysis. Premises and Facilities (HSE 2006) were mainly compliant as were space and furnishings (Harms et al. 2005)

Where they seemed to be inconsistencies was in the area of Health, Welfare and Child Development (HSE 2006) and Language Reasoning/Talking and Activities (Harms et al 2005). All six services scored poorly in the sub-scales in the two subscales, with an average rating of less than 4. This score indicates that the services were between minimal and good.

The data indicates that there was little consistency in relation to planning and curriculum also. The analysis of the questionnaire identifies that planning is something that is carried out and the team members from individual services were consistent with each other. However, the questions in relation to the planning and the review identified that everyone is involved in the planning process but not in the review. When similar questions were asked in the focus group there was little information on how planning outside of the individual room takes place and it was not a feature of team meetings. The implications of the results will be discussed in the following chapter.

5 CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide a discussion on the interpretation of the findings from the study presented in the previous chapter. The overall aim of this study was to ascertain the levels of quality in six early years' education services by identifying a baseline which would highlight areas of practice that required support. Following, a series of targeted interventions based on these areas could levels of quality be improved. The results pre-and post-intervention indicated that the levels of quality in the two intervention services increased more than the control group services.

Service D achieved the most significant increase from 3.6 at pre-intervention to 4.5 post. Service B the second intervention service achieved a rating of 4.8 in their Early

Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) and their Infant and Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS). Their pre-intervention ratings were 4.1 (ECERS) and 4.5 (ITERS). Services A and F control services also achieved an increase. Service A increased from 4.8 to 5.2 with Service F increasing from 5 to 5.3. The fifth service, Service E also a control service decreased their score in both ECERS and ITERS from 4.3 to 4.1 and 3.7 to 3.6 respectively.

This chapter will look at the themes that are emerging from the data and what the current literature says in these areas.

The subject of quality and how to improve is much debated within the current literature, quality permeates all aspects of practice within the setting being both a process and structural. (Ring 2016) In Ireland, there are various quality programmes that services can participate in, for example, Early Childhood Ireland, Centre of Excellence programme, (for full listing see Table 4 Initiatives available in Ireland Duignan 2005) the Early Years Policy Unit, a unit that is co-located in both the DES and the DCYA, are responsible for the roll out of *Síolta* (2006) and more recently the *Aistear/Síolta Practice Guide* (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) 2016), with Better Start early years experts available upon referral to come out and work with services on improving quality. (DCYA 2015). Quality means different things to different people but it is something that Hayes (2005) thinks we should peruse in the task of finding a complete way to measure it.

there is a general sense that there is far more to quality than checklist-like, measurable factors and the complexity of quality should not deter us in our task; rather the challenge of its complexity should guide us (Hayes, 2005:412)

5.1.1 The Study

The study was implemented over three stages. Stage one comprised of the pre-intervention observation and assessment of each of the participating centres. In addition, each centre provided supporting documentation from their service which included their Policies and Procedures on their daily operation and their most recent

HSE Pre-school Inspection. All participants were asked to complete an individual questionnaire.

Stage two was comprised of the feedback, agreeing and implementing the interventions. Before the interventions took place, focus groups were held with the teams from the intervention services. The purpose of the focus groups was to gather opinion on topics such as planning and curriculum implementation. In total 10 bespoke workshops were designed for the intervention services based on the rating achieved from stage one and informed by information gathered by the questionnaire and the focus groups. The final stage three, comprised of the post-intervention observation in order to compare the pre-and post-ratings. The research considered other influencing factors and reviewed each service's policies and procedures along with the most recent HSE Inspection Report.

The overall results from the rating scales indicated that four of the six services increased their ECERS ratings by an average of .5. One service indicated a decreased of .2 while the sixth service withdrew. In the two services, Service B intervention s and Service E control, which also included an ITERS assessment the results indicate that Service B increased their rating by .3 while Service E decreased by .1. Both services which received interventions Service B and Service D achieved the highest increase in their rating from pre-to post intervention.

5.1.2 A quality rating for the services

ECERS and ITERS are rating scales that have been used widely by early years' education researchers. (Mathers et al. 2007) which provide a snapshot of practice on any given day. The early years' education practice as indicated in the sets of statements under each rubric, in each area under each sub-scale must be observed in order for the service to receive credit for it. One of the scales anomalies is; in the retest observation if under the same rubric one statement received credit and another one lost its credit the day of observation, the effect on the rating was neutral. This means checking more

than a comparison of rates, the researcher or the service provider needs to look closely at the change in scores.

If it is the case and something was there in the first observation but not in the second, there is some scope to ask questions of the early years' education professional in the room being observed for clarity and credit maybe awarded. However, in some areas the awarding of credit was limited to early years' education practice observed on the day, for example the sand might have been available during the first observation but not in the second. Therefore, the rating might reduce in the retest, yet both the observer and the early years' education professional know that it exists and should be available for at least one hour every day for full day care or half an hour a day for sessional (Harms et al. 2005).

As ITERS and ECERS only provide a snapshot in time on what happens on any given day. This research was enriched by the supporting documentation, as having access to more than one source of information assisted in building a complete quality profile when used as a support tool. The profile of each service could not have been achieved without further documentation. It permitted the researcher to gain direct insight of the participants and their work by using the questionnaire. The focus group supported the relationships of familiarity prior to the intervention workshops.

While the research set out to see if quality levels could be increased by targeted interventions, influencing behaviour with increased knowledge on a subject, it also discovered other questions along the journey. For example, 'Why did the services rate so low in the very areas that they should achieve maximum rating'? Activities and Language Reasoning/ talking. These are, or should be the activities the early years' education providers have available daily for the children, the tools they use for learning and providing a rich environment in which the children can achieve their full potential. (NCCA 2009; Brennan 2005; French 2003; Copple et al. 2009). This topic will be discussed later in the chapter when considering the early years' environment.

5.1.3 Service Interventions

The interventions were 10 targeted workshops which were provided to two services participating in the study. For full listing see *Table 12 List of Intervention Workshops*. Topics for the workshops were agreed in advance with each of the individual teams. This was achieved through discussion, the teams also had the option to choose a topic that was something they identified they needed assistance with along with those identified through ECERS or ITERS. Service D chose two areas not identified through their ECERS rating, but chose topics where they felt they needed additional support following on from the recent pre-school inspection report. For example, they had received 10 non-compliances and asked for support to understand why and to work towards compliancy.

Service B opted to have an intervention session on ‘An Introduction to Aistear’ as their first workshop. All the participants in service B indicated in both the questionnaire and the focus groups that they knew about Aistear and they were using them. The early years’ education professionals stated during the focus groups how good they thought Aistear was. They found the process of linking activities to the themes to be very easy and in more than one incident activities could be linked to more than one theme. They stated that if it could not be linked under Aistear you should question yourself if you should be doing the activity or not.

If the study was simply about increasing the rating score, the researcher may just have supported the services to achieve the statements in the sub-scales of ITERS/ECERS by simple instruction if you do x you will then be rated excellent (7). This research wanted to achieve more than that, the purpose was to identify if quality could be improved by changing behaviour. Not only changing what we do but changing how we think about the practice in early years’ education. Therefore, the requests for additional workshops outside of what was identified by the rating scale were facilitated.

5.1.4 Gathering a picture of quality

Care and education services...need to be of high quality with professional responsive and caring staff stimulation environments and an educational curriculum (Start Strong 2010:40)

Internationally in the last decade, there has been a shift in thinking in the literature from trained staff being the main key to quality early years' education provision, to concentrating more on the variables or the softer less tangible attributes that occur in settings for example, the relationships with the children. (Early 2006; Sylva et al. 2006; Hayes 2008; Pianta et al. 2006).

The term quality early years' education according to Marshal (2004) is where children are cared and educated in a safe nurturing environment. Ryan and Goffin (2008) consider training and qualification to be only one of a number of variables in the early years' education setting and all variables to be considered when measuring quality.

Hall (2009) Melhuish (2001) and Ring (2016) describe quality as being two pronged the structures being the first and the second the process. Therefore, this study required more than one instrument or method to gather as much objective data on the level of quality in early years' education settings. The variables identified in *Figure 1: Independent and Dependent Variables*, were Programme and Planning, The Early Years Professionals, The Classroom Environment, The Service Culture, and the Parents. The tools used to gather information reported on some way on each of the variables.

5.2 THE EARLY YEARS EDUCATION PROFESSIONAL

The role of a teacher in early childhood education is crucial and multifaceted and has been characterised as a combination of listener, questioner, advisor, demonstrator, actor, sympathiser, negotiator, assessor and guide Athey (1990) cited in Hayes (2008:435).

5.2.1 Profile

While setting out to gather a profile of the participants may have seemed futile as anecdotally people believe the sector is predominately female. Nonetheless it was worthwhile to confirm that the participants in this study were in line with national trends. These trends are identified in the Pobal annual beneficiary report (Pobal 2015).

The analysis of the questionnaire included in this research found the workforce to be predominantly female on low wages, with minimal terms and conditions in relation to annual leave, sick pay or any entitlements. There was no distinction between the community and the private operators for any of the terms and conditions. The majority of positions the early professionals held were seasonal and or part time. It is worth noting that the majority of the respondents to the questionnaire were employed in Full Day Care services and not sessional. Therefore, it can be concluded that even though a service is offering early childhood care and education programmes for more than five hours a day, the employees are part-time. As the participants were not asked which they would prefer no conclusion could be drawn. The research also indicates that the average age of the early years' education professional was 38 years and 67.7% of them were parents so it may suit the participants to be in a part-time role.

Again, these findings are in line with national trends, in 2013 a strategic plan for the early years was published and it was a recommendation that the profession should be supported through higher wages in early care and education services by requiring adherence to an agreed salary scale as a condition of public funding (DCYA 2013:22). At the time of publication of this study this recommendation had not yet been implemented.

5.2.2 Professional Title

In relation to a title for the early years' education professional no consensus was achieved, those that were working in the Montessori environment were very clear that they were Montessori teachers, room leader was the second most popular title. Yet it means nothing to someone outside the profession and goes nowhere in describing the

work involved on a daily basis in some early years' education setting. (Urban 2016) Those who work within the sector continue to achieve professional qualifications yet have no agreement on what they should be called.

5.2.3 Qualifications, Formal and Continuous Professional Development

Quality has long since been linked to qualifications. There now exists a plethora of research that states quality childcare is linked to the qualifications of the early years' education professional. Rhodes and Hennessy (2000), Early & Winton (2001), Miller and Bogatova (2009) and Fukkink and Lont (2007). The higher the qualification the higher the quality (Barnett 2003).

The data gathered from this study indicated that the level of qualification for the respondents ranges from National Qualifications Authority Ireland (NQAI) Level 5 childcare qualification to an early years' education degree at NAQI Level 8.

50% of the services had personnel trained to degree level, two of the control services and one of the intervention services. The trend that appeared in the qualifications was the trend of upskilling, 38% of the respondents had successfully obtained NQAI level 5 and a level 6 in Childcare while 3% achieved Level 5, Level 6 and then their degree. The trends show that the early years' education professional is upskilling all the time. As the questionnaire, did not ask what prompted the respondents to do the training no conclusion can be made. However, the terms of the ECCE contract were changed and ECCE services require a person qualified to a NQAI Level 6 in early years' education as the room leader. Services that have a NQAI Level 7 or higher as the room leader achieve the higher capitation for ECCE (€72.50 per child per 38 weeks). In the results one service had moved a degree level respondent from the baby room to the ECCE room. The room's curriculum was Montessori based and the respondent had no formal qualification in Montessori, therefore they were the lead person in name only.

Irrespective of the rationale for the obtaining of qualifications, international research indicates that the impact will be positive on the children in their care. (Moss 2000, Sylva et al. 2004).

5.2.3.1 Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

The response was wide and varied in relation to the question on additional training, it included short training courses such as first aid and localised workshops. The data indicates that greatest participation at additional training courses are the ones that are required by the legislation that governs the early years' education sector. The first is First Aid training which is required under the 2001 Childcare Act - 2006 Pre-school Regulations, Regulation 6. In the analysis of the pre-school inspection reports Service D was found to have no team member with an up-to-date First Aid Certificate, six respondents from Service D five indicated that they had completed First Aid training. To remain compliant a refresher first aid must be completed within two years of completion of the original qualification. The second training topic was Manual Handling which comes under The Health, Safety and Welfare Act 2005 (Department of Health 2005), 54% had indicated that they had completed a manual handling course.

The third highest attendance with 42% was Child Protection Training which comes under both the Pre-school Regulations and 'Children First' The National Child Protection and Welfare. Child Protection also forms part of Regulation 8 under the 2006 Pre-school Regulations as some of the requirements for the Management of staff are there to safeguard the children. For example, Garda Vetting, References and appropriate adult supervision of the children. All the participating services has a robust policy and procedure on Child Protection and five of the six were found to have a non-compliance under Regulation 8, with three of the five missing Garda vetting for one or more team members. This has been highlighted as an issue under recruitment, needing a qualified early years education person to take up employment so the service can meet the Adult: Child ratio and the turnaround in getting Garda Vetting. Each employer must have their own vetting for each employee and is only valid for a three-year cycle. (ECI 2016). In 2016 the e-vetting system was launched to provide a faster turnaround with some services claiming 48 hours. One of the benefits of this fast

turnaround for employers is, staff may be taken on without having to wait up to six months for the vetting to come through and found non-compliant while they waited. The situation was a no win for the services they required to be compliant under the adult: child ratio, however there was a six month wait for vetting leaving the provider exposed to a second non-compliance. The respondents were not asked why they did not have Garda vetting for their team members so no conclusion can be drawn from this research. However, as the Inspection Reports were dated pre-2016, and in no case, was there more than one team member without Garda Vetting this may have been the case.

The rest of the training identified are continuous professional development type workshops provided and run by a variety of support agencies such as County/City Childcare Committee and National Voluntary Organisations. The topics were varied with no clear theme identified, some of the topics were ones that were to be covered again by the intervention. The developments in the early years' education in the last decade have had implication for continuous professional development, and the upskilling of the early years' education professional. Despite no financial reward the early years' education professionals have taken on a wide and varied amount of continuous professional development. One of the Síolta standards is on the continuous professional development of the early years' education professional.

In much of the literature regarding professional practice in ECCE, reference is made to the importance of reflective practice and ongoing professional development as the essential processes to ensure that high standards of quality provision are maintained (Dahlberg et al. 1999; UNESCO 2004 as Cited by CECDE 2006)

The findings from Neylon (2014) may indicate that the sector has not got the capacity to deliver on the Aistear and Síolta frameworks. However, the early years' professionals are turning up at Continuous Professional Development (CPD) sessions to build their own capacity. This should be acknowledged and the resources required provided. CPD for those that tutor and lecture at third level is also essential as the early years' landscape is changing so fast. Chu (2014) who cites Norris (2001) states that research points to the need for professional development to be ongoing or renewed periodically. As it has implications for quality, early years' professionals need time

to consider, understand and accept a new concept as they have to apply it to their practice, which in turn impacts on the outcomes for the children. While Neylon (2014) states the capacity is not there, perhaps it is a case of more CPD and the resources required to support early years' professionals with implementation.

5.2.4 Personal Attributes

International studies conducted by Moss (2000); Sylva et al. (2004) and Arnett (1989) illustrate the correlation between a qualified early years education workforce and improvements to quality early years' education practice, which assumes the higher the qualification the higher the quality. The individuals that come to work every morning are greater than their qualifications, they bring what is often referred to in education as 'the hidden curriculum' (Wren 1999). This curriculum comprises of personal opinion, personal preference, personal attributes, dispositions, things that may not be considered by the early years' education professional unless they are truly reflective of themselves in their practice. (Paige-Smith and Craft 2007) The results of the research did not draw any conclusive evidence and any claims would require deeper analysis. However, all the respondents from Service D were always positive in their answers, yes school was enjoyable, yes, they influence the children and they described themselves as motivated, happy, reliable and hard working. It is worth noting the findings of Ryan and Goffin (2008) when they identify that qualification is only one of the variables of measuring quality in an early years' education setting.

5.3 THE EARLY YEARS EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT

According to Finch (1996) as cited in French (2007), Edwards et al (1998) and the DCYA (2103) the environment in the early years' education setting both indoors and outdoors should encourage positive growth where children can develop through opportunities to explore and learn. The spaces should be aimed at supporting the child's learning and their development, a well laid out room will engage a child and the play-will be self -directed, if the early years' education professional finds themselves monitoring the room, the activities and the child then the

room/environment is not laid out correctly (National Childrens Nursery Association, 2007). It is the environment that should be controlled not the child.

A well-arranged environment should enhance children's development through learning and play. It facilitates classroom management and supports the implementation of curricular goals and objectives. (Catron and Allen 2007:100)

ITERS and ECERS consider the physical environment under the Sub-Scale Space and Furnishings, eight individual areas are observed considered. The 'indoor space' was reflected in things like having sufficient space that was well lit with good ventilation. This emphasis on this physical requirement is consistent with what the Pre-school Regulations 2006, enough floor space in an environment where both and heat can be controlled. The participating services achieved an ECERS/ITERS rating 4 or greater and were compliant under the analysis of the Inspection Reports.

Space for privacy is an area that is important for children in a well-designed environment, it provides a place for children if they need to withdraw from the large group, they can rest, observe the play for while or just to recharge. (Sanoff 1995) In this area four of the participating services received a rating of less than 4. The concept of private space can cause conflict for the early years' education professional with health and safety issues, with the early years' education professionals needing to be in a position to observe the children at all times within the room. It is the room layout that needs to be rectified not the exclusion of a space for privacy.

Provision of sufficient equipment for gross motor development was observed in all of the participating services. One service had a rating of less than 4 in the ECERS pre-intervention observation this was down to the equipment not being age appropriate for the older child in the pre-school room. This did not improve during the post-intervention observation as it required the purchasing of some new equipment. NCNA (2007) state that the environment should meet the children's development needs, this includes physical needs. The Environment should provide equipment that is age and stage appropriate, areas for play should be well defined to afford children to get engrossed in their play.

5.3.1 Accessibility of Equipment

One of the main themes that ran through the ratings of the ITERS and ECERS was the accessibility of equipment. Services may have had the equipment but the children were not permitted full access to it therefore the opportunity to play was dependent on the adult. This is interesting as the results in the questionnaire would indicate that one of the challenges the respondents face in delivering a quality service is the lack of access to equipment and materials. It is an important factor for children to be given choice and freedom to do so within a controlled or a well-designed environment (Copple and Bredekamp 2009). “Children need to be able to easily access equipment and have free choice” (French 2003:72). Children need to learn at their own pace, and through their own interests. Hayes (1993) states that it is important for the child to have the freedom to learn through their own activity, to be mindful that this does not leave them wandering aimlessly, the plan and structure should exist. This is achieved through a well organised environment containing materials that are developmentally appropriate. According to Holt (2007) in a Highscope setting the learning environment will be set out in areas where children can play alone, with other children or with adults. The areas should be large and spacious as possible to encourage all types of play.

5.4 PRACTICE /CURRICULUM

The services who participated in this study offered two types of curriculum Montessori and Play based. Stacey (2009) states that there are two basic approaches to curriculum planning and development that of the pre-planned like Montessori and an emergent curriculum supported by play-based principles. All services were aware of the Irish early Childhood Curriculum framework ‘Aistear’ and some claimed to be implementing it (NCCA 2009). The research indicated that services were aware of Aistear. They understood the four themes and knew how to link the play activities to the themes, aims and goals of the framework and were very comfortable with engaging with this section of Aistear. The second book within Aistear (NCCA 2009) is the guide

of best practice and it was in this section of the implementation that there appeared to be little engagement.

Service B had concerns in the way they were implementing Aistear and requested it as their first intervention workshop. Hayes (2008) makes a very clear distinction between adult-centred teaching and child-centred teaching. She describes adult centred as the teacher having greater control over the choice of activities and providing the information for the children to learn, whereas a child-centred approach includes behaviours that actively involve the children and guiding them in the learning process. The early years' education professional achieves this through offering choices, encouraging activity and providing assistance where required. In the Effective Provision of Pre-school education (EPPE), Siraj-Blatchford (2004) identify that the characteristics associated with highly effective settings include a clear role for the adult such as modelling, demonstrating, explanation and questioning.

The research indicates that the activities that were provided for under the Montessori equipment/curriculum achieved a higher rating. The research has no evidence as to why this was the case.

While the Aistear framework consists of four themes each with their own set of aims and goals, it also identifies four areas of good practice. These areas are Partnership with Parents, Interactions, Play and Assessment. The respondents were asked to rate them in accordance with their importance to everyday practice. The results indicated that only 30% ranked them all as important. Partnership with Parents was ranked the highest by 67% of the respondents. The timing of the questionnaire was around the time a programme on crèches aired on RTE called 'breach of trust' (RTE, Prime Time, May 2013) and there was heightened awareness of the importance of partnership with parents, this may have influenced this high response.

The results also indicated that 13% did not rank play as important in their everyday practice. The respondents all came from the one service that was in the control group. This service was the only service not to increase their rating in the post-intervention observation.

While every service had a copy of Aistear, not every room did, therefore restricting access.

Since this research has been conducted there is a further piece of supportive documentation in the national arena and that is the Síolta/Aistear Practice guide. This is designed to be a supportive tool to assist early years' education professionals in designing and implementing both the quality and curriculum frameworks. (NCCA 2016)

Service B requested an additional workshop on Aistear, it took place in the service setting. The question that was posed by the participants was 'Am I doing it all wrong'? Aistear is a framework and the participants could see clearly the links in what they do every day aligning to the goals. However, that is the easy part of looking at Aistear. Most services can link activities to a theme, they display this and it is thought that they are '*doing Aistear*'. What is being neglected is the good practice guidelines of the manual, the second part to the book. The challenge for the early years' education professional is to apply their role according to the manual and the good practice guidelines. In the manual, the providers are told their role is to plan, to support, to assess, to reflect and that the learning environment is crucial in shaping what children learn. This is the section that the service needed support on. The information on their planning as identified in the analysis of both the questionnaire and the focus group was inconsistent. They identified the following from the questionnaire. They agreed that planning should be weekly, but there was a variety of responses as to who does the planning, the information they identified that they used for planning in the questionnaire were 'through observations' allowing the children to decide, ideas from team members, library, internet, previous plans and experience. In the focus groups participants stated that they did not have team meetings to discuss planning, but they indicated they shared ideas with each other in the rooms.

There was no formal structure in place for the respondents to plan and all were doing their own thing. It was not something that was a group activity nor did they share information with each other, If they did share it was down to them being in the same

room or they had the same age group. Planning is critical to the success of any curriculum (NCCA 2009) Early years' education services need to engage more with the planning process, to understand it and value the importance of it. Without planning is not possible to implement a successful curriculum, as the activities are just activities where the learning will not be developed. The service scored low in activities which should be the very kernel of what is going on their service, it is here the learning takes place. Planning is a crucial part as children learn more where the service has a well-planned and implemented curriculum (Copple et al. 2009; French 2003).

5.4.1 Planning

While planning is not an identified area or sub-scale of ITERS or ECERS it is covered across the sub-scales of Programme Structure and Parents and Staff. There were no particular trends under these sub-scales with a very mixed results or ratings identified. The only area where there was a trend was in the area of opportunities for professional growth under sub-scale Parents and staff, the maximum rating achieved by any service in this area was 4, with only one service achieving that pre-intervention observation.

Planning was an issue raised in both the questionnaire and the focus groups. Services are encouraged to have plans/schedules in the Pre-school Regulations 2006 (HSE 2006) to ensure every child is achieving their development potential. One of the requirements of the pre-school regulations 2006 under regulation 5 Health, welfare and development of the child is observations on each individual child. It is recommended by Tulsa that there is at least one observation per term (Tusla 2016).

The following findings on planning are supported by the results of both the questionnaire and the focus groups. The questionnaire asked about the frequency of the planning and who was responsible for it. There was a variety of responses with no trends, one respondent to the questionnaire indicated that there were no plans in his/her service. Most of the teams were in agreement in relation to when the plan was carried out daily weekly, monthly or quarterly. 38% of the respondents did not answer the question who carried out the planning. There was also the option to indicate that you

did not know who carried out the planning. One respondent did indicate they did not know, but in the free text they contradicted this and stated the room leader did the planning. When it came to reviewing the plan two of the services under the same management had an equal split in both services 50% saying it is and 50% saying the plan is not reviewed. The questionnaire analysis indicated that in the planning process there were more participants involved than were involved in reviewing the plan. For example, both parents and children were included in the planning process but they were omitted from the review process. It was mainly room leaders and managers who did the reviewing.

In the focus group, the responses were a bit less structured as in planning was more of an evolving process depending on what was going on. “according to the children” the “interests of the child” “colours, numbers” (CBR04P08) “each room has their own plan” (CDM04P27). The main reason for not sticking to the plan is the “weather”. If it is good they just go outside. The early years’ education professionals were missing opportunities for supporting learning when the children go outside. The planning did not take into account the outdoor environment, there was no evidence of a plan or structure for the outside play. The learning environment outside needs to be supported for play in the same way indoor play is (Bruce 2001) is just as crucial as important as the indoor environment. In the observation for the rating scale while the use of gross motor equipment was observed, for the adult it was almost like they were only go out to supervise, very little engagement with the children was observed while they were outside.

Overall planning and scheduling are areas that need support. The respondents understood the importance of planning and the value of it, but it was not something they had time to do, and it was not something they stuck to once they had it completed. Each room that was observed did have a schedule on the wall with a list of activities broken down to an allocated time, but for the most part they were there to satisfy the HSE requirement. They had responded that the plan was reviewed in the questionnaire but it was not a meaningful process. They had the tools and the information but were not linking the two. Aistear (NCCA 2009) states that the

purpose of assessment is to provide information to assist the early years' education professionals plan in order for them to provide enjoyable and challenging learning experiences. It is these experiences that support the children to grow and develop as competent and confident learners. Yet the whole process of assessment and scaffolding learning (Garhart and Mooney 2013) appeared to be missing.

Another aspect of the planning process that appears to be misguided is observations. Observations were mentioned as part of the planning process but there was no evidence in the practice to support this. The observations were very much for the Pre-school Inspectorate to look at and for the parents to take home. A crucial function of the observation is to use it as an assessment tool. Through watching children at their play you can identify the learning interest and level of play in order to support and 'scaffold' a child's development onto the next step or expand the area of interest. (Hobart and Frankel 2009; Harding and Meldon-Smith 2000). Observations were there again as a requirement of the Pre-school regulations (2006) but there was no evidence of building on the learning or the observations, linking the activities in a meaningful way from either the questionnaires or the focus groups.

Throughout the process, it was not clear if there was any linking of theory to practice. The services had daily schedules with a list of comprehensive activities, that they were happy to link to the Aistear framework. The concept of following the child's lead was discussed in the focus group and in the questionnaire, however it was not recorded during the observation for the rating scale. The services have robust policies and procedures about good practice, planning and observations but again it appears to be missing from implementation. The data indicated that services had all the right tools but just were not using them.

5.4.2 Activities:

The activities sub-scale rating under ITERS and ECERS rated the lowest of all the seven sub-headings. All six of the services rated 4 or below which is less than good as to achieve good a rating of 5 is required. According to Ryan and Goffin (2008) a number of questions need to be explored by early years' education professionals, what is it they do? how and why they do it as they do? and what is required for them to do their work better? Then the authors suggest that this has not been at the core of our thinking about quality. While this is not what this research set out to find, it appears the same questions are relevant. The recurring theme was that the educational materials were not readily available or accessible by the children. Respondents indicated the challenges for them was lack of resources including materials and the time to carry out the activities.

Specifically, the results indicated that both ECERS and ITERS increased post-intervention for Service B, (intervention group) The ITERS score increased overall by .3 with the largest increase in Activities which increased by .8 from a score of 4.3 which is half way between minimal (3) and good (5) to a score of 5.1 which is just above a rating of good (5).

On closer examination of the results and the breakdown of sub-scale Activities there were three main areas where the service achieved a higher rating, Art achieved an increase of 3 from a rating of 1 to 4. Music and Movement achieved an increase of 2 increasing from 1 to 3 and Sand and Water achieved an increase of 3.5 increasing from .5 to 4. Service B was in receipt of five intervention workshops including Art and Music and Movement.

The results indicated that the ECERS rating increased post-intervention for Service D, (intervention group) from 3 which is minimal to 4.5 which is just below a rating of good (5)

On closer examination of the results two sub-scales achieved the greatest increase, Activities and Programme Structure. Both of these areas were covered in intervention workshops for Service D. Activities achieved an increase of 2.3 from a rating of less than minimal (3) to a rating of just below good (5)

Services A and F (control group) also experienced increases, however there was no apparent trend in the areas where they achieved a higher rating. All the participating services were analysed individually for feedback purposes during the process and they were informed on the outcome of the observation and their ratings. This process was facilitated in an open, honest and transparent way. This enabled each team to clearly understand and interpret their results. Each team was permitted to ask questions during the process to help clarify any aspect of the research that they did not understand.

The Pre-school Inspection reports that were analysed as part of this current study generally reported what the rating scales ITERS and ECERS measured. The services all had robust Policies and Procedures on providing a quality service, but this did not translate into what was observed on the ground. That is, it appeared that while each service had the necessary documentation it did not appear that services were engaging with the documentation to assist them in providing a quality service. For example, Language Reasoning and Activities were two areas where the trend from the scales indicated poor ratings with services achieving a rating of 4 or less. One service did achieve a rating of 4.7. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2011-2020 acknowledges that the early years' education is where the foundations of learning are laid.

Early childhood, the period from birth to six years of age, is a time of significant opportunity for learning. During these early years' education, children take their first steps along their journey of lifelong learning. They have an inherent capacity to learn from birth and the experiences they have in their homes and wider environment impact significantly on their development and future learning (Department of Education and Skills, 2011:10)

The trends in this research are in line with findings of Neylon (2014) services in Ireland to have minimal (3) standards in literacy and maths while inadequate (1) in the areas of environment and diversity. The study was conducted over 26 pre-schools throughout Ireland, measuring and assessing or literacy, maths, science and the environment and diversity. The same system of rating applies to this scale inadequate (1), Minimal (3), Good (5) and Excellent (7). Although the researchers used two

different versions of the same rating scale the results yielded similar results. The ECERS/E was the only method used to gather data in the Neylon (2014) research.

Neylon (2014) concluded that the low achievement in the ratings may have implications for services in their capacity to deliver on the two national frameworks Aistear and Síolta. If by capacity she means that the services need to be given the right tools to support them to deliver on the national frameworks and enhance their pedagogy practice, then the finding of this research would concur. O'Dwyer and McCormack (2014) conducted a similar study of baseline, intervention and retest in eight community run sessional services in Dublin. The research from this study concluded that the early year's services and their teams need support to deliver on the current requirements.

While it is to be acknowledge that the sample size in this study is small, the results of the targeted interventions go some way to illustrating how direct information and feedback can improve the quality of pedagogy practice through meaningful activities and interactions. Hayes (2008) argues that there should be a shift in prescribed curriculum to a more interactive one, this research indicates that in order for this to happen the early years' education professional must be given the right tools and an understanding of what free play is, that is not a free for all in an uncontrolled environment. Rather the environment has been well designed and laid out to give free choice, with free expression and the opportunity to engage in the play in a safe environment.

Services that offered a Montessori curriculum scored high in the areas of Nature and Science and Maths and Numbers. Both of these areas are subjects in the Montessori curriculum and catered for within the equipment in the services. ECERS rating of 5.3 pre-intervention observation and 5.1 post-intervention observation for the six services. Dramatic play was high in the play based services this was not the case for the Montessori services. Overall all six of the services had provision of table top activities and home corner with dress up to accommodate role play. There was no issue with supply of fine motor materials, but with the dress up, services need to address the gender stereo typing of the outfits, workmen, superheroes and princesses were

common outfits in all services. At no stage of the research were respondents asked to breakdown how much time is spent doing educational activities and how much time is spent on noneducational activities. In support of Ryan and Goffin (2008) there should be more focus on how the early years' education professionals are carrying out their daily activities. Teacher education would benefit if the focus was on the interactive nature of the learning process in early years' education rather than the implementation of a prescribe curriculum (Hayes 2008)

5.4.3 Language Reasoning/Talking

A second ECERS sub-scale where the services rated low was in Language Reasoning/Talking. The average ECERS rating pre-intervention observation across the six services was 3.3 which is just above minimal (3). Post-intervention observation across five services the average was 4.7 which is closer to the rating good (5). The ITERS rating across the two full day care services remained the same pre and post-intervention observations with 2.7 which is just below minimal (3).

What was observed were missed opportunities in all services for language development. For example, some of the conversations the adults were having with the children in some cases were very functional practical expressive language to give the overall direction rather than engaging in meaningful dialogue. An example from the observation was in Service C the children were being brought outside to play, the children were instructed to put their coats on. It was an opportunity to talk about on and off, right and left zip up and down and buttons open and shut. Service B recognise that there is learning in everything and they also highlighted the value in promoting self- help skills such as putting on coats.

The lower rating in ITERS is something that both services should work on as this is the time when children are sensitive to language development. (Copple et al. 2009). Reading was not something that was observed in any of the services outside of circle time. The book corners while they did exist were not inviting places and the books were poorly arranged and in some incidents needed repair. This was highlighted in the analysis of the pre-school inspection report under Regulation 25 Premises and

Facilities, where service B was found non-compliant for having torn books in their book corner. In contrast, improvement in the ECERS rating came about as there were more resources/materials encouraging the children to communicate.

5.4.3.1 Age Appropriate

The age and stage of the child is important when considering needs and how to respond to children. The early years' education professional should treat each child as an individual and support their development appropriately for their age and state. The language used by the early years' education professionals was not always age/stage appropriate. For example, in one service the practice of getting younger children to say sorry and telling them they had to share. Children at this stage of development generally are not ready to share and do not fully comprehend the use of the word sorry, as they are not sorry for not sharing. They simply did not want to and are not at a stage where they are ready to share (Copple and Bredekamp 2009)

Early years education professionals demonstrated through their questionnaire responses their capacity in understanding the importance of their role through their identification of children learning through example. The basic needs of all the children are being met under health and safety, there are clearly strong bonds in relationships as the interactions are generally good for both children and their parents. However, what is crucial is that while early years' education providers have the qualifications, how this translates into their understanding of a child's needs in an early years' education environment warrants exploration. Clarity of understanding young children's needs is of paramount importance to quality provisions.

5.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR EARLY YEARS EDUCATION SERVICES IN IRELAND

In Ireland, today there are many developments for the early years' education sector, some identified to support quality, some to support working parents, while others support disadvantaged children. These developments included amendments to the Pre-school Regulations, Two National Frameworks, one for Quality (Síolta) and one for Curriculum (Aistear), A support system for quality provision through Better Start (Aistear/Síolta Practice Guide) (Walsh 2016) An inspection for the education experiences. In addition, they receive a compliancy visit from Pobal (Pobal 2015) if they offer any of the Government funding schemes.

The Government funding schemes include the universal free pre-school, subvention rates for families in receipt of social welfare, those on back to education initiatives and those on Community Employment. (DCYA 2016) A review is missing on these measures to identify how they are impacting on the quality of the sector. No baseline was gathered prior to these developments and their implementation and at best the only recommendation is to gather a sample bassline (DCYA 2013)

To-date Síolta was the only initiative that was evaluated (Goodbody 2011). The report provided a list of eleven recommendations that would make the implementation of Síolta a more effective process. One of the more general recommendations was in relation to the training for the Síolta Co-ordinators, that is should be intense training where they would cover information in respect to the Regulations and how to deal with conflicts that may arise between the two documents. While this study did not encounter conflict between the two documents of the rating scales and the inspection reports, it did recognise the value in having all of the information when addressing the quality agenda. In short, it is not possible to work in a silo with a one size fits all solution.

This study proposed to gather a baseline and use the findings to develop an intervention programme for each of the individual teams. There was no preconceived idea of what the intervention should or would contain, no template or product for the services to engage with, no restrictions on support areas. Services identified what was working and what was not. The research's end point was to deliver higher quality early

years' education provision for children, but its starting point was to look at the variables that impact on this. The variables that were identified in *Figure 1: 'Independent and Dependent Variables'*, as impacting on quality provision were all included as part of the research, not always directly but sometimes indirectly. For example, Parents are identified as a variable, partnership with parents was recognised as being important in the questionnaire and one service chose to have an intervention in relation to it. The research was concerned with changing practice by challenging opinion and knowledge in order to change behaviours that had become part of the daily routine but not in line with policy. The study contributes to research and practice that searches for practical ways to improve quality, it recognises that the skills and the knowledge of the early years' education professional are important to the quality, but must take the individual as a whole unit with their own complexities within their working environment. To-date no large-scale research that is specifically focused on what happens within the pre-school services has been identified in the Irish context.

This study while small acknowledged that before interventions are developed you must find a starting point that everyone is in agreement with. The services were included in this decision process, that is, what interventions were required and a good induction built a relationship of trust and honesty which supported an environment of learning. Services need real supports in their individual communities, the one size fits all notion has not worked. This research indicated they have the tools i.e. a policy on play, yet the implementation is lacking. It is possible that the early year's professionals are so preoccupied in meeting the regulations and linking activities to themes that they have lost sight of their practice and their function in delivery early years' education provision. They are becoming robotic like as they deal with the litany of inspectors and experts coming through their doors telling them how to do their job, all the while there is no cohesion from these inspectors and experts, each working from their own perspective of policy and practice. It is the opinion of the researcher based on experience and findings that it is not the capacity of early years' education professionals to perform in the workplace, that is in question but rather the regulation and inspection that has hindered free thinking and the failure to provide guided support above bureaucracy.

The results for this research indicate a significant impact on quality provision from the Pre-school Regulations. Services (Department of Health 2016) achieved, good ratings in areas that are governed by the regulations. For example, space and furnishings and personal care routines. The services scored high in their interactions with the children, however it is clear that we need more than care for effective teachers (Ryan and Goffin 2008). This was evident on how they approached scheduling and observations, these were based on meeting the criteria of the inspectorate rather than utilising them as tools in the development of quality experiences. It is about having the confidence in what they are doing, knowing their child development and evaluating situations to promote learning.

It is time to look at what is going on in our early years' education services and ask why they are not performing in the areas where learning and development is set to take place. This research took a snap shot of each service. All of the services were provided feedback with two services receiving targeted interventions which appear to have had a positive impact as both services increased their rating. Similarly, two of the control group services improved through open discussion and targeted feedback.

6 CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the primary aim of this research was to design, develop and generate specific interventions for the early years' education professionals with a view to supporting them to improve the quality of their practice. This piece of research set out to conduct interventions that were targeted based on each participating service's need. These needs were identified by using a variety of tools namely the rating scales of ECERS and ITES, supported by questionnaires, focus groups and relevant documentation. The interventions were completed in partnership with each individual team. According to Fullan (2007) as cited in Howe and Jacobs (2013) change involves three dimensions (1) materials, (2) teaching approaches (3) beliefs and active involvement from the participants is crucial.

To have an overall impact on quality there are many areas that need consideration for example the setting, the environment, the plan, the early years' education professionals, their beliefs and views.

...policies focused solely on increasing teachers' education will not suffice for improving classroom quality or maximizing children's academic gains. Instead raising the effectiveness of early childhood education likely will require a broad range of professional s development activities and supports targeted towards teachers interactions with children (Early et al 2007:558)

By undertaking to do a rating on the Environment using the scales of ECERS and ITERS and supporting documentation, this study set out to get a robust view of provision in the early years' education settings. The results demonstrated that the effect of the interventions was positive.

6.1 DEVELOPMENTS IN IRELAND

The Irish early years' education landscape is rapidly changing. Over the life cycle of this research there have been more development in quality than there was over the previous decade, initiatives such as Better Start to support services, two co-ordinators in post for the two national frameworks to oversee the implementation of their roll out. Learner Fund to financially support those working in an early year setting obtain the required National Qualification Authority Ireland (NQAI) Level 5 in early years to pay their fees. This expanded to include NQAI Level 6 and a bursary for those doing a level 8. In 2016 developments were imminent, the new Department of Education and Skills (DES) inspections were the subject of information sessions, the Access and Inclusion Model for supporting equality and diversity in the early years was in infancy, the new affordable childcare scheme was announced in the budget, supporting working parents with Ireland's high cost of childcare. (Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2016)

With all the changes to national policy there was a deficiency in the literature on the impact of all these developments on the early years' education in Ireland. In addition, the resources to accompany the developments in the early years' education sector has been sluggish. There will never be quality service provision if all the variables are not taken into account including the process and the systems at national level for the delivery of quality early years' education. (Urban 2016) One such concern raised by Murphy (2015) that the quality initiatives have tended to focus on the three to four year olds and that the under-threes have been neglected, and while not a significant number this research did find that one team member was moved from her role with the under 3's to a lesser role under a less qualified person with the over 3s.

The literature clearly demonstrates the correlation between a qualified workforce and the provision of quality learning experiences for children. Early et al. (2007) states that it is more beneficial if the effectiveness of early childhood education is supported through a range of targeted range of professional development activities. Ryan and Goffin (2008) argue that more data is required to learn what early years' education professionals actually do. Perhaps this could be reviewed when support services go into a service, and instead of coming in with an expert hat on, they need to go in to listen and learn about the service, their ethos, their resources and most importantly where they are starting from. There is a need for robust set of supports with one clear co-ordinating agency delivering on a national strategy for early years.

The research indicates that the sector has poor employment terms and conditions and there is no incentive for the workforce to upskill as the higher capitation goes to the owner/mangers and may not be reflected in salary. Yet the development for improving quality keeps coming with limited resources for in-service training. The expectation is that a workforce with minimal qualifications at NQAI Level 5 and Level 6 will somehow embrace and implement these changes without significant resources or recognition of their work in the long term is doomed for failure.

As Ireland has no one system of identifying quality in the early years' education, tools are used independently of each other. (Walsh 2016). There needs to be greater co-ordination between the support services and the regulators. While the decision was made in 2005 to bring responsibility for children out of the eight government departments into one for greater co-ordination (Walsh 2016) it now appears, that more services are being developed and Ireland's early years' policy again has many stakeholders, Better Start Initiative (DCYA 2015), Síolta Co-Ordinator (DES 2016) and Aistear Co-Ordinator (NCCA 2016). The Health Service Executive (HSE) role remains the same as the enforcement/inspection agency for the Pre-school Regulations (2006 2016), the DES are involved in the educational inspections. Quality support was put in place under the umbrella of Better Start, located in Pobal and more recently the announcement of Aistear/Síolta mentors managed through the NCCA (DCYA 2015). Each of the agencies has their own remit, yet quality is multifaceted, therefore it is important the agencies take into account the whole picture of quality and not just their piece. They each need to go beyond their own piece to achieve a deeper understanding of what is going on in a service at a given time, collaboration and co-ordination are key. It was important for this research to get the views not only of the regulators through the inspection reports but the views of the early years' education participants themselves, a complete picture allowed for the interventions to provide real solutions for the individual services.

The Irish quality agenda is supported by many agencies. Services at the coal face delivering the outcomes for the children need to be supported in a cohesive manner with one clear message. They have got the capacity but lack the direction, their voice is somehow lost. One of the successes of the project was the relationship built on mutual understanding. The early years' education professional need to be reminded that they are there to deliver quality experiences for the child to reach their full developmental potential. Ultimately all agencies have the same goal, to delivery high quality early years' education services.

This research unfortunately highlighted that services scored low in the areas of practice, one could argue that with all the development and all the requirements they have fundamentally forgotten why they are there, to support the development and wellbeing of the children through the medium of play.

Ireland needs to build a realistic picture of quality. There needs to be greater knowledge about what is going on currently in practice. Resources need to be reviewed and evaluated considering current and past developments. Then a quality early years' education system can be built and delivered to ensure quality outcomes for our children.

7 CHAPTER SEVEN: REFERENCES

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8 CHAPTER EIGHT - APPENDICES

8.1 APPENDIX I - ANALYSIS OF INDIVIDUAL INSPECTIONS

- INFORMATION

There are three regulations identified under the heading of Information, these are regulations 10, 11 and 31. The services have been marked compliant or non-compliant on the table below in accordance with their pre-school inspection report.

REGULATION:	SERVICE											
	A		B		C		D		E		F	
<i>C= Compliant N= Non- Compliant</i>	C	N	C	N	C	N	C	N	C	N	C	N
Information on Pre-school:10	1		1		1		1		1		1	
Information on Pre-school: 11	1		1						1			1
Information on Pre-school Setting: 31	1		1		1		1				1	

- a) Regulation 10 -Notice given that a person is carrying on a pre-school service.
This is the notice period that a service must give the Pre-school inspectorate
- b) on their intention to open and the type of facility they will be offering. All the services were compliant under this heading.
- c) Regulation 11 – Notification of change in circumstances. If there are any changes to the type of service or the facility the service provider must notify the Pre-school Inspectorate.
 - o Service E: Change to person operating the service – HSE not given the required 28 Days
 - o Service F: Change to person operating the services
- d) Regulation 31 Annual Fees-. These are the annual fees paid to the pre-school inspectorate as part payment for their inspection. All services were compliant.

- MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING

There are is only one regulation under Information and Management, regulation 8. The services have been marked either compliant of non-compliant in accordance with their pre-school inspection report.

REGULATION:	SERVICE							
	A	B	C	D	E	F		

<i>C= Compliant N= Non- Compliant</i> Information on Management and Staffing: 8	C	N 1	C	N 1	C	N	C	N 1	C	N 1	C	N 1
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- e) Regulation 8 - Management and Staffing. Services are requested to have the correct adult-child ratios. They must also name the person in charge and where applicable the deputy. All staff members must be Garda vetted and there must be an employment file for each member of the team, including references. This must all be conducted prior to the person taking up employment. Five out of the six service were found to be non- compliant under this regulation.
- o Service A; No comment was made on the feedback sheet.
 - o Service B: Incorrect ratios, no past references, 2 Garda vetting's not carried out
 - o Service D: Staff member out sick – not enough coverage for toileting-playroom downstairs not adequately supervised.
 - o Service E: No references on file, No Garda Vetting and Police Vetting
 - o Service F: No references on file, No Garda Vetting

● REGULATIONS ON HEALTH, WELFARE AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

There are two regulations under the Information on Health Welfare and development of the child Regulation 5 and 9. The services have been marked either complaint or non-compliant in accordance with their pre-school inspection report.

	SERVICE											
REGULATION:	A		B		C		D		E		F	
<i>C= Compliant N= Non- Compliant</i>	C	N	C	N	C	N	C	N	C	N	C	N
Information on Health, Welfare and Development of Child: 5	1		1		1			1	1		1	
Information on Health, Welfare and Development of Child: 9	1		1		1		1			1	1	

- f) Regulation 5 – Health Welfare and Development of Child. In this regulation services are asked to ensure the learning, development and welfare of each individual child is being met. This is to be achieved through a comprehensive programme/curriculum. Two services were found non-compliant under this regulation.

- o Service E: Basic needs, Programme of activities, Physical environment
- o Service F: More observations required

g) Regulation 9 – Behaviour Management. The service must ensure they have a positive policy and procedure to deal with challenging behaviour, that is respectful of the child and ensures no corporal punishment. One service was found to be non-compliant under this regulation.

- o Service E: No positive behaviour management policy in place

● REGULATION ON PREMISES AND FACILITIES

Under the heading of Premises and Facilities there are nine regulations to be complied with. Regulations 18 through to 25 and Regulation 28. Services have been marked Compliant or Non compliant in the table in accordance with their inspection report.

REGULATION:	SERVICE											
	A		B		C		D		E		F	
	C	N	C	N	C	N	C	N	C	N	C	N
<i>C= Compliant N= Non- Compliant</i>												
Information on Premises and Facilities: 18				1	1			1	1			1
Information on Premises and Facilities: 19				1	1		1		1			1
Information on Premises and Facilities: 20			1		1		1		1		1	
Information on Premises and Facilities: 21			1		1		1		1		1	
Information on Premises and Facilities: 22			1		1			1	1		1	
Information on Premises and Facilities: 23			1		1		1		1		1	
Information on Premises and Facilities: 24			1		1		1		1		1	
Information on Premises and Facilities: 25		1		1	1			1	1			1
Information on Premises and Facilities: 28		1		1	1		1		1		1	

h) Regulation 18 – Premises and Facilities. Services have to ensure that the premises is safe, in good repair and rodent/pest free. Correct storage for hazardous items, and all related equipment for the children. They must provide adequate space for the children. It also states adequate storage for the personal belongings of the children and the staff is required. Three services were found

to be non-compliant under this regulation these are listed below with the inspector's comments from the report.

- o Service B: Some safety hazards (fire extinguisher lose, unsealed timber shelf, radiator guard detached from wall)
- o Service D: Lock accessible to children, thermostat broken, no staff storage.
- o Service F: Mouse infestation in Hot-press
- i) Regulation 19 – Heating. The temperature in an early years education service must be between 18- 22 degrees celsius always. Two services were found to be non-compliant under this regulation.
 - o Service B: Temp too cold by 5 degrees in sleep room
 - o Service F: The room Temp too cold
- j) Regulation 21 – Lighting. The light in a service must be adequate. All services were fully compliant with this.
- k) Regulation 22 – Sanitary Accommodation. There must be suitable sanitary facilities within the building. One service was found to be non-compliant under this regulation.
 - o Service D One toilet to 19 children, no soap, cloth towels for the drying of hands, no ventilated lobbies on toilets off play room.
- l) Regulation 23 – Drainage and Sewage. All services compliant
- m) Regulation 24 – Waste storage and disposal All services compliant.
- n) Regulations 25 – Equipment and materials. The services must ensure that there is adequate materials that are safe and in good repair. Three services were found to be non-compliant in this area.
 - o Service B: Insufficient furniture in the Montessori Room, some torn books, In the toddler room materials were not clean or hygienic.
 - o Service D: Door knob missing, play sink damaged, use of cloth towels.
 - o Service F: Outdoor play equipment in need of cleaning.
- o) Regulation 28 -Facilities for rest and play. Services must have suitable areas for children to rest in and there are spaces to play both indoor and outdoor. One service was found non-compliant in this area.
 - o Service B: Inadequate resting facilities for children

● REGULATION ON INFORMATION ON SAFETY MEASURES

Under the heading of Safety Measures there are four regulations to be complied with, Regulation 6, 7, 16 and 27. Services have been marked either compliant or non-compliant in accordance with their report.

REGULATION:	SERVICE											
	A		B		C		D		E		F	
<i>C= Compliant N= Non- Compliant</i>	C	N	C	N	C	N	C	N	C	N	C	N
Information on Safety Measures: 6	1		1		1		1	1			1	
Information on Safety Measures:7	1		1		1		1		1		1	
Information on Safety Measures:16			1		1		1	1				1
Information on Safety Measures: 27				1	1		1		1			1

- p) Regulation 6 – First Aid. The service must have a suitably equipped first aid box. One service was found to be non-compliant on this.
- o Service D: No team member had an up to date first aid certificate
- q) Regulation 7 – Medical Assistance. The service must have the right medical information and can summon medical assistance. All services were compliant in this area.
- r) Regulation 16 – Fire Safety. The service must have the appropriate equipment and carry out regular fire drills. Two services were found non-compliant in this area
- o Service D: had no fire safety policy and no record of fire drills
 - o Service F: Had no record of the maintenance of their fire alarms
- s) Regulation 27 – Safety Measures. This regulation covers a lot of areas all related to safety, including infection control, water temperature and external fencing. Four of the services were found to be non-compliant in this area.
- o Service B: A variety of issues that needed action. (e.g radiator guards, unprotected sharp corners, trailing flex, socket covers, toilet brush left out)
 - o Service D: A variety of issues that needed action. (e.g. socket covers, trailing flexes, shatter proof covers on light bulbs)
 - o Service E: No procedure for outings
 - o Service F: The emergency exit was partially obstructed by plastic bags waiting for collection.

8.2 APPENDIX II - EMPLOYMENT LAWS GOVERNING EARLY YEARS EDUCATION

The following is a summary of the legislation that has been introduced in this period concerning employment protection:

- The Paternity Leave and Benefit Act 2016 provides for statutory paternity leave of 2 weeks to be taken in the first 6 months following birth or adoption of a child.
- Equality (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2015 provides for certain changes in the exclusions of discrimination and prohibits discrimination against tenants getting a social welfare payment or a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP).
- Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015 provides for a system of registered employment agreements and sectoral employment orders.
- Workplace Relations Act 2015 reorganises and reforms employment rights structures by establishing the Workplace Relations Commission that has replaced the Labour Relations Commission, Rights Commissioner Service, Equality Tribunal, and National Employment Rights Authority.
- Employment Permits (Amendment) Act 2014 amends and extends the Employment Permits Acts 2003 and 2006 through the provision of 9 different types of employment permit and changes to the criteria for issuing employment permits.
- Protected Disclosures Act 2014: This Act protects employees who make disclosures about wrongdoing that comes to their attention in the workplace from penalisation.
- The Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2012: This Act reforms the wagesetting mechanisms for making Employment Regulation Orders and Registered Employment Agreements.
- Protection of Employment (Temporary Agency Work) Act 2012: This Act provides that since 16 May 2012 all temporary agency workers must have equal treatment as if they had been directly recruited by the hirer in respect of the duration of working time, rest periods, night work, annual leave and public holidays and pay. The right to equal pay is backdated to 5 December 2011.
- Protection of Employment (Exceptional Collective Redundancies and Related Matters) Act 2007: This legislation establishes a redundancy panel to consider certain proposed collective redundancies. The Act also removes the upper age limit for entitlement to redundancy payments.
- Employment Permits Act 2006: This Act updates the Employment Permits Act 2003, introducing the Green Card permit and revising the legislation on work permits and spousal permits.
- Employees (Provision of Information and Consultation) Act 2006: This legislation sets establishes minimum requirements for employees' right to information and consultation about the development of their employment's structure and activities. Since 23 March 2008 it applies to employers with at least 50 employees.

- Parental Leave (Amendment) Act 2006 amends the Parental Leave Act 1998 which provides for a period of unpaid parental leave for parents to care for their children and for a limited right to paid leave in circumstances of serious family illness (force majeure).
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005: This legislation replaced the provisions of the Safety, Health and Welfare Act 1989 when it came into operation on 1st September 2005. It consolidates and updates the existing health and safety law. Changes include the provision for higher fines for breaches of safety legislation.
- Adoptive Leave Act 2005: It amends the Adoptive Leave Act, 1995 which provides for adoptive leave from employment principally by the adoptive mother and for her right to return to work following such leave.
- Maternity Protection (Amendment) Act 2004: It includes new provisions relating to ante-natal classes, additional maternity leave, breastfeeding making significant improvements to the Maternity Protection Act 1994 which covers matters such as maternity leave, the right to return to work after such leave and health/safety during and immediately after the pregnancy.
- Equality Act 2004: This legislation makes significant amendments to the Employment Equality Act 1998 which prohibits discrimination in a range of employment-related areas. The prohibited grounds of discrimination are gender, marital status, family status, age, race, religious belief, disability, sexual orientation and membership of the Traveller community. The Act also prohibits sexual and other harassment. The Equality Act also amends the Equal Status Act 2000 to extend the definition of sexual harassment and shift the burden of proof from the complainant to the respondent.
- European Communities (Protection of Employees on Transfer of Undertakings) Regulations 2003. This legislation applies to any transfer of an undertaking, business or part of a business from one employer to another employer as a result of a legal transfer (including the assignment or forfeiture of a lease) or merger. Employees rights and entitlements are protected during this transfer.
- Protection of Employees (Fixed Term Work) Act 2003: This legislation protects fixed-term employees by ensuring that they cannot be treated less favourably than comparable permanent workers and that employers cannot continually renew fixed term contracts. Under the Act employees can only work on one or more fixed term contracts for a continuous period of four years. After this the employee is considered to have a contract of indefinite duration (e.g. a permanent contract).
- Organisation of Working Time (Records) (Prescribed Form and Exemptions) Regulations 2001. The main purpose of this EU Regulation is the requirement by employers to keep a record of the number of hours worked by employees on a daily and weekly basis, to keep records of leave granted to employees in each week as annual leave or as public holidays and details of the payments in respect of this

leave. Employers must also keep weekly records of starting and finishing times of employees.

- Protection of Employees (Part-Time Work) Act 2001 - this replaces the Worker Protection (Regular Part-Time Employees) Act, 1991. It provides for the removal of discrimination against part-time workers where such exists. It aims to improve the quality of part-time work, to facilitate the development of part-time work on a voluntary basis and to contribute to the flexible organisation of working time in a manner that takes account of the needs of employers and workers. It guarantees that part-time workers may not be treated less favourably than full-time workers.
- Carer's Leave Act 2001 - this provides for an entitlement for employees to avail of temporary unpaid carer's leave to enable them to care personally for persons who require full-time care and attention.
- National Minimum Wage Act 2000 - introduces an enforceable national minimum wage.
- Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 - regulates a variety of employment conditions including maximum working hours, night work, annual and public holiday leave.
- Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act 1996 - replaced previous legislation dating from 1977 and regulates the employment and working conditions of children and young persons.
- Terms of Employment (Information) Act 1994 - updated previous legislation relating to the provision by employers to employees of information on such matters as job description, rate of pay and hours of work.
- Unfair Dismissals Act 1993 - updates unfair dismissals law and amends previous legislation dating from 1977.

8.3 APPENDIX III: ETHICS APPLICATION



Dublin City University
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF A PROJECT
INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

Application No. (office use only)
DCUREC/2012/

This application form is to be used by researchers seeking ethics approval for individual projects and studies. **An electronic copy** of your completed application must be submitted to the DCU Research Ethics Committee. **Student applicants must cc their supervisor on that e-mail** – this applies to undergraduate, masters and postgraduate students.

NB - The application should consist of one file only, with an electronic signature from the PI. The completed application must incorporate all supplementary documentation, especially that being given to the proposed participants. It must be proofread and spellchecked before submission to the REC. All sections of the application form should be completed. Applications which do not adhere to these

requirements will not be accepted for review and will be returned directly to the applicant.

Applications must be completed on the form; answers in the form of attachments will not be accepted, except where indicated. No hardcopy applications will be accepted. **Research must not commence until written approval has been received from the Research Ethics Committee.**

Note: If your research requires approval from the Biosafety Committee, this approval should be in place prior to REC submission. Please attach the approval from the BSC to this submission.

PROJECT TITLE

A review of the relationship between professional development and adult/child interactions in an early years education setting.

**PRINCIPAL
INVESTIGATOR(S)**

Fiona Healy

Please confirm that **all** supplementary information is included in your application (in electronic copy). If questionnaire or interview questions are submitted in draft form, a copy of the final documentation must be submitted for final approval when available.

	INCLUDED		NOT APPLICABLE
Bibliography	X		<input type="checkbox"/>
Recruitment advertisement	X		<input type="checkbox"/>
Plain language statement/Information Statement	X		<input type="checkbox"/>
Informed Consent form	X		<input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence of external approvals related to the research	<input type="checkbox"/>		X
Questionnaire	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	draft	final	
Interview Schedule	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	draft	final	
Debriefing material	<input type="checkbox"/>		X
Other - - Letter Ethics Advisory Committee DCU dated 14/05/12	<input type="checkbox"/>		X

Please note:

1. Any amendments to the original approved proposal must receive prior REC approval.
2. As a condition of approval investigators are required to document and report immediately to the Secretary of the Research Ethics Committee any adverse events, any issues which might negatively impact on the conduct of the research and/or any complaint from a participant relating to their participation in the study

Please submit the electronic copy of your completed application to
fiona.brennan@dcu.ie
Fiona Brennan, Research Officer, Office of the Vice-President for Research and
Innovation
(01-7007816)

Guidelines to Applicants

1.1 PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S): *The named Principal Investigator is the person with primary responsibility for the research project. Doctoral researchers and Research Masters or their supervisors may be listed as Principal Investigators, depending on the conventions of the discipline and on the individual case. It should be made clear, in subsequent sections of this application, who is carrying out the research procedures. In the case of Taught Masters and undergraduate student projects the supervisors are Principal Investigators.*

2.0 PROJECT OUTLINE: *Provide a brief outline of the project, aims, methods, duration, funding, profile of participants and proposed interaction with them. This description must be in everyday language that is free from jargon. Please explain any technical terms or discipline-specific phrases.*

2.1 LAY DESCRIPTION: *Provide a brief outline of the project, including what participants will be required to do. This description must be in everyday language which is free from jargon. Please explain any technical terms or discipline-specific phrases. (No more than 300 words).*

2.2 AIMS OF AND JUSTIFICATION FOR THE RESEARCH: *State the aims and significance of the project (approx. 400 words). Where relevant, state the specific hypothesis to be tested. Also please provide a brief description of current research, a justification as to why this research should proceed and an explanation of any expected benefits to the community. NB – all references cited should be listed in an attached bibliography.*

2.3 PROPOSED METHOD: *Provide an outline of the proposed method, including details of data collection techniques, tasks participants will be asked to do, the estimated time commitment involved, and how data will be analysed. If the project*

includes any procedure which is beyond already established and accepted techniques please include a description of it. (No more than 400 words.)

2.4 PARTICIPANT PROFILE: *Provide number, age range and source of participants. Please provide a justification of your proposed sample size. Please provide a justification for selecting a specific gender.*

2.5 MEANS BY WHICH PARTICIPANTS ARE TO BE RECRUITED: *Please provide specific details as to how you will be recruiting participants. How will people be told you are doing this research? How will they be approached and asked if they are willing to participate? If you are mailing to or phoning people, please explain how you have obtained their names and contact details. This information will need to be included in the plain language statement. If a recruitment advertisement is to be used, please ensure you attach a copy to this application.*

3.3 POTENTIAL RISKS TO PARTICIPANTS AND RISK MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES: *Identify, as far as possible, all potential risks to participants (physical, psychological, social, legal or economic etc.), associated with the proposed research. Please explain what risk management procedures will be put in place.*

3.6 ADVERSE/UNEXPECTED OUTCOMES: *Please describe what measures you have in place in the event that there are any unexpected outcomes or adverse effects to participants arising from involvement in the project.*

3.7 MONITORING: *Please explain how you propose to monitor the conduct of the project (especially where several people are involved in recruiting or interviewing, administering procedures) to ensure that it conforms with the procedures set out in this application. In the case of student projects please give details of how the supervisor(s) will monitor the conduct of the project.*

3.8 SUPPORT FOR PARTICIPANTS: *Depending on risks to participants you may need to consider having additional support for participants during/after the study. Consider whether your project would require additional support, e.g., external counselling available to participants. Please advise what support will be available.*

4.0 INVESTIGATORS' QUALIFICATIONS, EXPERIENCE AND SKILLS: *List the academic qualifications and outline the experience and skills relevant to this project that the researchers and any supporting staff have in carrying out the research and in dealing with any emergencies, unexpected outcomes, or contingencies that may arise.*

5.2 HOW WILL THE ANONYMITY OF THE PARTICIPANTS BE RESPECTED? *Please bear in mind that where the sample size is very small, it may be impossible to guarantee anonymity/confidentiality of participant identity. Participants involved in such projects need to be advised of this limitation.*

5.3 LEGAL LIMITATIONS TO DATA CONFIDENTIALITY: *Participants need to be aware that confidentiality of information provided can only be protected within the limitations of the law - i.e., it is possible for data to be subject to subpoena, freedom*

of information claim or mandated reporting by some professions. Depending on the research proposal you may need to specifically state these limitations.

6.0 DATA/SAMPLE STORAGE, SECURITY AND DISPOSAL: *For the purpose of this section, “Data” includes that in a raw or processed state (e.g. interview audiotape, transcript or analysis). “Samples” include body fluids or tissue samples.*

8.0 PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT: *Written information in plain language that you will be providing to participants, outlining the phases and nature of their involvement in the project and inviting their participation. Please note that the language used must reflect the participant age group and corresponding comprehension level.*

9.0 INFORMED CONSENT FORM: *This is a very important document that should be addressed by participants to researchers, requiring participants to indicate their consent to specific statements, and give their signature.*

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND NOTES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENTS AND INFORMED CONSENT FORMS, PLEASE CONSULT THE DCU REC WEBSITE: [HTTP://WWW.DCU.IE/INTERNAL/RESEARCH/REC_FORMS.SHTML](http://www.dcu.ie/INTERNAL/RESEARCH/REC_FORMS.SHTML)

1. ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

THIS PROJECT IS: ☐ Research Project ☐ Funded Consultancy

(tick as many as apply) ☐ Practical Class ☐ Clinical Trial

☒ Student Research Project ☐ Other - Please Describe:
(Professional Doctorate of Education DCU)

☐ Research Masters ☐ Taught Masters

☒ PhD ☐ Undergraduate

Project Start Date: **June 2012**

Project End date: **September 2014**

1.1 INVESTIGATOR CONTACT DETAILS *(see Guidelines)*

Fiona Healy

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S):

<i>TITLE</i>	<i>SURNAME</i>	<i>FIRST NAME</i>	<i>PHONE</i>	<i>FAX</i>	<i>EMAIL</i>
Ms	Healy	Fiona	0868548371		Fiona.healy5@mail.dcu.ie
Dr	Scanlon	Geraldine	01 7006779		Geraldine.scanlon@dcu.ie

OTHER INVESTIGATORS:

<i>TITLE</i>	<i>SURNAME</i>	<i>FIRST NAME</i>	<i>PHONE</i>	<i>FAX</i>	<i>EMAIL</i>

FACULTY/DEPARTMENT/SCHOOL/ CENTRE:

School of Education, DCU

(NB – if Nursing and Human Sciences, please note all students including PhD's must attach the letter from their Ethics Advisory Committee to this application)

1.2 WILL THE RESEARCH BE UNDERTAKEN ON-SITE AT DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY?

[YES × NO *(If NO, give details of off-campus location.)*

In the early years education settings that
agree to participate on the study

1.3 IS THIS PROTOCOL BEING SUBMITTED TO ANOTHER ETHICS COMMITTEE, OR HAS IT BEEN PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED TO AN ETHICS COMMITTEE?)

☐ YES * NO *(If YES, please provide details and copies of approval(s) received etc.)*

DECLARATION BY INVESTIGATORS

The information contained herein is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, accurate. I have read the University's current research ethics guidelines, and accept responsibility for the conduct of the procedures set out in the attached application in accordance with the guidelines, the University's policy on Conflict of Interest, Code of Good Research Practice and any other condition laid down by the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee or its Sub-Committees. I have attempted to identify all risks related to the research that may arise in conducting this research and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants.

If there any affiliation or financial interest for researcher(s) in this research or its outcomes or any other circumstances which might represent a perceived, potential or actual conflict of interest this should be declared in accordance with Dublin City University policy on Conflicts of Interest.

I and my co-investigators or supporting staff have the appropriate qualifications, experience and facilities to conduct the research set out in the attached application and to deal with any emergencies and contingencies related to the research that may arise.

Electronic Signature(s):

Principal investigator: __Fiona Healy____

Print Name(s) here: **Dr Geraldine Scanlon** (Supervisor) **Fiona Healy**(Researcher)

Date: __10/11/2012____

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researchers, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project

Participants Signature: _____

Name in Block Capitals: _____

Date: _____

Researcher Signature: _____

Name of Researcher:__FIONA HEALY_____

Date: _____

8.4 APPENDIX IV: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

MAIN QUESTION	PROBE
1. Do you like what you do?	
2. What are the main tasks are in the service	The jobs you carry out everyday
3. How do you implement them?	What do you do everyday?
4. What do you think about education in the early years	Is it important? Do they value what they do? Will anyone share their own experience,
5. Does every room have their own curriculum plan?	Find out what these plans are. Based on seasons e.g. Where are these? Who has access to them?
6. How are the plans designed?	Is everyone involved in the process
7. Do you have meetings, what does this involve?	Who goes to the meetings When do they happen How often do they happen
8. Do you have enough information to input meaningfully?	What documentation is brought to the meetings? Do you see the inspection reports? Do you share your ideas at the meetings?
9. How is the children's work recorded/documented?	How often is a child assessed? Who assesses them? Why do you assess them? How do you use them? Who has access to them?
10. How do you share the information with parents?	
11. What is your opinion on the Aistear Themes?	Well-being, Identify and Belonging, Communication and Exploring and Thinking
12. Are you able to cover all you need to cover under the themes?	
13. Do you find it easy enough to include the Aistear Themes	Get examples of work and activities carried out
14. How do you link these to Síolta	
15. Again how do you share this with your parents	
16. How do you communicate with the children?	
17. Do you think about the messages you are sending to the children on a daily basis?	
18. How would you describe the interactions with children in this service – Positive/ Negative	
19. How is this accomplished?	
20. How are changes decided on?	Do you have autonomy in your own area to make changes
21. Who can implement them?	
22. What do you do if you see practice you don't agree with??	

8.5 APPENDIX V: THE PRESENTATIONS

8.5.1 Activities

ACTIVITES & Language and Reasoning

CENTRE D
Fiona Healy
DCU PDPE/55143644

ACTIVITES

- Fine Motor
- Art
- Music/Movement
- Blocks
- Sand/Water
- Dramatic Play
- Nature/Science
- Math/Number
- Promoting Acceptance of diversity

Too much to look in detail

- Art – Not accessible (mark making opportunities)
- Very few Language and reasoning opportunities

“We can best help children learn, not by deciding what we think they should learn and thinking of ingenious ways to teach it to them, but by making the world, as far as we can, accessible to them, paying serious attention to what they do, answering their questions -- if they have any -- and helping them explore the things they are most interested in.”

[John Holt](#) – How Children Learn

ART

Why is ART important?

- Refines fine motor movement control
- Pre-writing skill.
- Insight into how children think.
- links to reading and mathematics.
- Can be used as a method of Assessment of learning and in learning.

Functions of creativity

- Develop full range of human potential
- improve capacity for thought, actions and communication
- Nurture feelings and sensibilities
- Extend physical and perceptual skills
- Explore values, understand cultures

(Calouste Gulbenkian)

7

Documentation

- Enhancement of children's learning
- Taking children's ideas and work seriously
- Teacher planning and evaluation with children
- Parent appreciation and participation
- Teacher research & process awareness
- Children's learning made visible

Aistear – the Curriculum Framework

Communication

- Communication Aim 1
 - LG 6 –Express themselves creatively and imaginatively using non-verbal communication
- Communication Aim 4
 - LG2 – express themselves through the visual arts using skills such as cutting drawing, gluing, sticking, painting, building printing, sculpting and sewing
- Communication Aim 3
 - LG 5- Have opportunities to use a variety of mark making materials in an enjoyable and meaningful way

Well-Being

- Well-Being A3
 - Express themselves creatively and experience the arts

Exploring & Thinking

- ▶ Exploring & Thinking Aim3
 - ▶ Make marks and use drawing painting and model-making to record objects events and ideas

Language & Reasoning

Language and Communication is vital!

Children need these skills to reach their full potential

They need to learn;

- Understand words, sentences and conversations

→ 'receptive language'.

- How to talk using words and sentences

→ 'expressive language'.

- Know how to use their language socially. For example, listening as well as talking, or talking to a teacher differently than to a friend 'pragmatic language'.

- Say speech sounds correctly so they can be understood by others



Communication Chain



When asking questions:

- Consider the child's level of understanding
- Avoid multiple questions
- Questions should relate to what the child is looking at ?
- Ask a question and wait for at least 3/5 seconds.

Blanks Question System

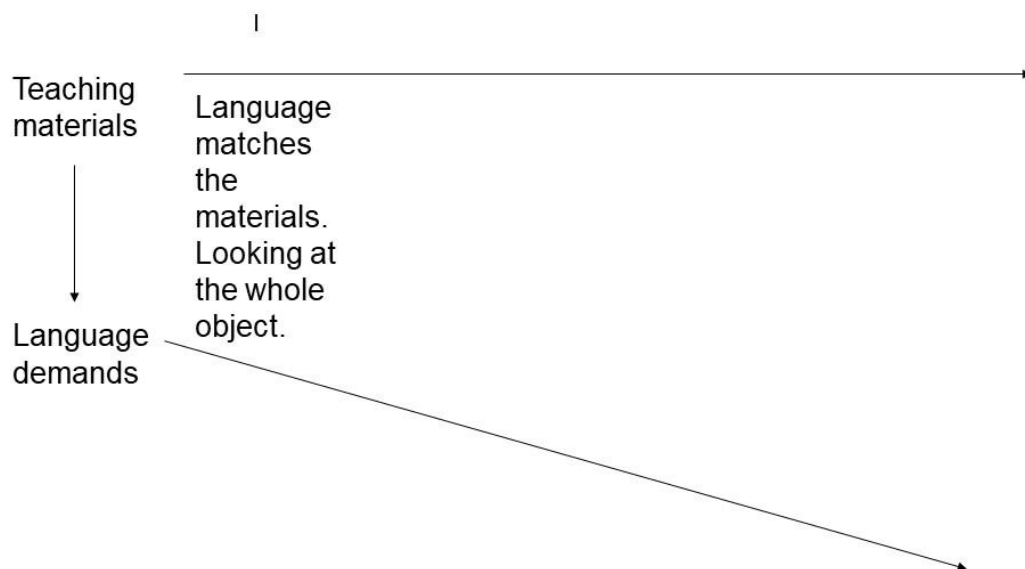
What is blanks?

- Work of Blank, Rose and Berlin 1978.
- Originate in USA but used here and in Australia.
- They studied a number of classrooms and looked at what kinds of questions teachers asked the children and what the children had to do in response.
- 4 levels that reflect levels of understanding and verbal reasoning.

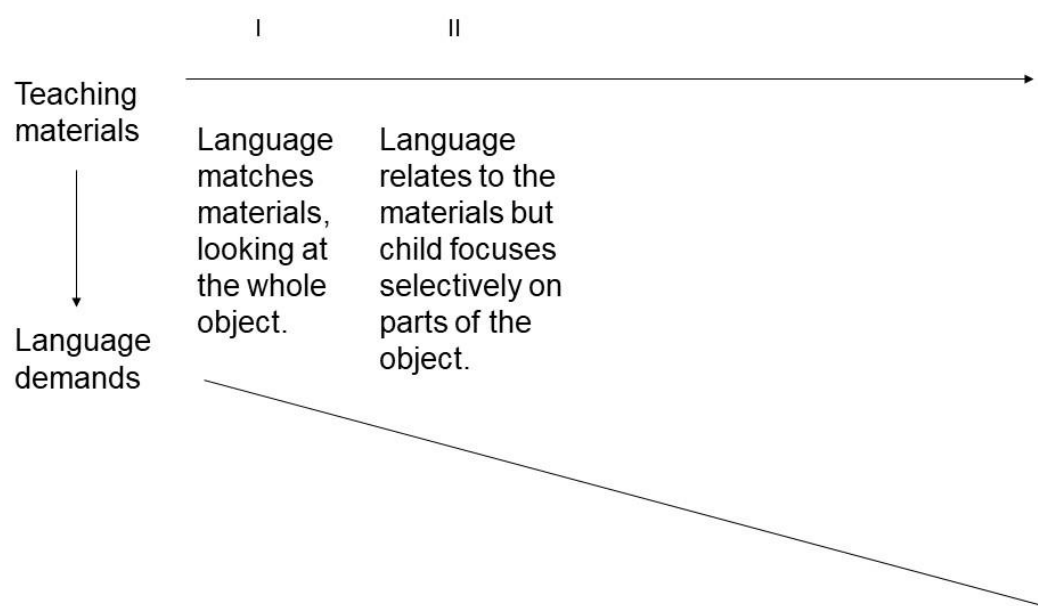
Sequence of questions

- What
- Who
- Where
- When
- Why/ How
- Solve Problem

Language for Learning Model



Language for Learning Model



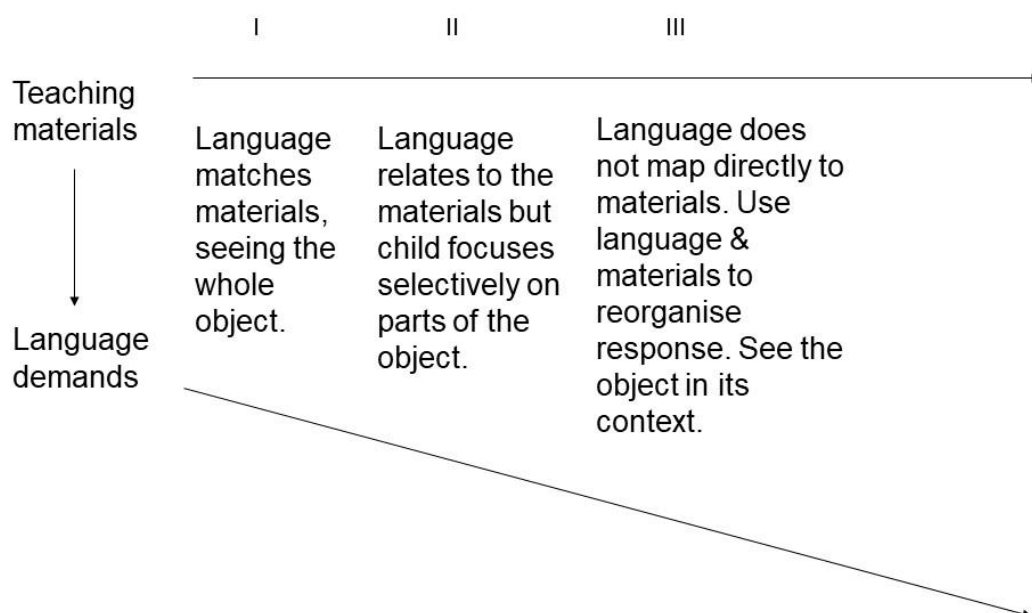
Level 2 Questions

Function	Which is the food you have to cook?
Sentence completion	The Caterpillar is.....walking
Things that go together	Moon and Sky (putting objects together)
Sorting and categorising (Give an example – objects in sight)	What else can you eat?
Linguistic concepts	Walk quickly/slowly/hard/soft. Which fruit is big /little? How many items of fruit can you see?

Level 2 Questions

Describe a scene	What is the caterpillar doing?
Talking about what can be seen or showing a picture or giving information and asking:	
Who?	Who is the story about?
What?	What is he doing?
Where?	Where is he walking to?

Language for Learning Model



Level 3 Questions

Follow a set of directions	One more go with the sand then we will move to the water area.
Give another example BUT listen to extra conditions	What else can you play drive through the sand?

Level 3 Questions

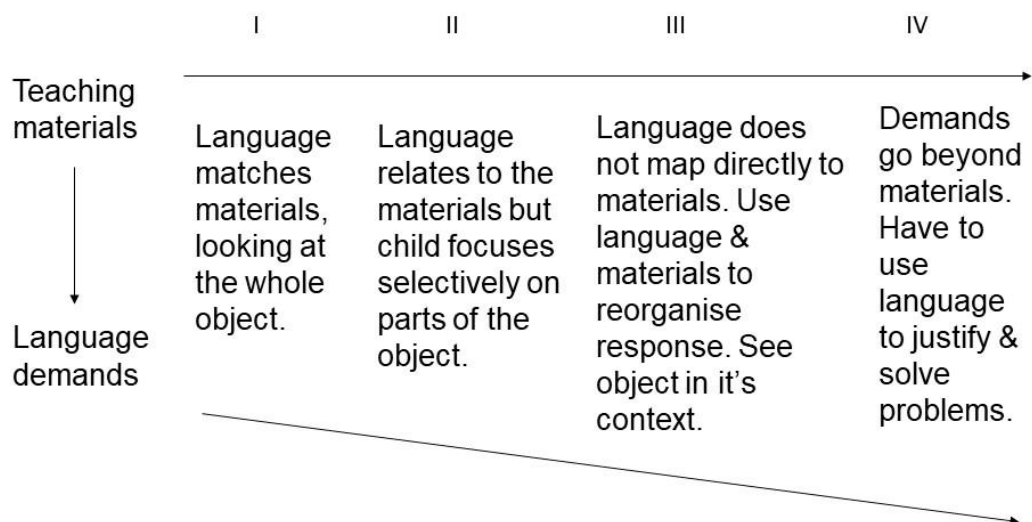
Narrative/re-telling events

Arrange pictures in a sequence	Arrange photos of the story
Tell a story or describe an event	Tell me how to you came to preschool today?
Summarise the story/event in one sentence	What have you got for snack today?

Level 3 Questions

Predict	What might happen next?
How does a character feel?	Look! how does the caterpillar feel now?
Define a word	What does 'cocoon' mean?

Language for Learning Model



Level 4 Questions

Justify a prediction	Why might the bubbles spill?
Identify the cause	Why does he have a pain?
Solve a problem	He was very hungry, Where can he find food?
Solve a problem from another person's point of view	How did he get out of the cocoon? What should he do next?

Level 4 Questions

Make an inference from an observation	How can you tell that the leaf has been eaten?
Explain why something cannot be done	Why can't you eat all that food at the same time?
Select a means to a goal	How do we make cupcakes/rice krispies in preschool?

Percentage of Children Able to Respond at Different Language for Learning Levels

Level I	Naming things	60% of 3 year olds understand at level I and level II
Level II	Describing things Who? What? Where?	
Level III	Talking about stories and events	65% of 5 year olds understand at level III and level IV
Level IV	Solving problems and answering Why?	

The importance of Blank

- Assess the types of question a child understands
- Assess a child's verbal reasoning skills
- Ensure realistic expectations of child's understanding
- Modify our language to suit each child
- Develop a child's verbal reasoning skills
- Support learning across different curriculum areas
- Manage issues of discipline more effectively

Blank is highly flexible and can be used
in all situations with all ages.

Aistear Workshop
23rd June 2014

Presenter: Fiona Healy BSc MA

AM I DOING 'IT'
RIGHT?
I KNOW THERE IS
NO RIGHT OR
WRONG
BUT AM I DOING IT
RIGHT?

Basic Questions

What is Aistear?

- A curriculum framework for the early years.

Who is Aistear for?

- All Children aged birth to six.

Where will it be used?

- Sessional Services
- Full & Part time day cares
- Childminders
- Primary School - Infant classes
- The Home.

The Manual

BOOK ONE pg's 1-58 - The What

- The Introduction
- The 12 Principles
- The 4 Themes

BOOK TWO pg's 1-117 - The How

- Guidelines for good practice
- The Appendices

What is its Purpose

- **YOU**

To assist adults plan for and provide enjoyable and challenging learning experiences.

- **THE CHILD**

The experiences will assist children to grow, develop as competent and confident learners within a loving relationship with others.

How

- Identifies what and how children should learn
- Makes connections in children's learning throughout the early childhood years as they move from one setting to another
(Childminder → Pre-School — Primary School)
- Supports Parents as their children's primary educators, and promotes effective partnership between parents and practitioners.
- Compliments and extends existing curriculums and materials (e.g. Montessori, High/Scope, Steiner etc.)
- Informs practice across a range of settings, disciplines and professionals and encourages interdisciplinary work.

YOUR ROLE

- ✕ To Plan
- ✕ To Support
- ✕ To Assess
- ✕ To Reflect.

The learning environment is crucial in shaping what children learn

The Child Care (pre-school services (no.2) Regulations. Regulation 5

A person carrying on a pre-school service shall ensure that each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the service through the provision of the appropriate opportunities, experiences, activities, interaction, materials and equipment having regard to the age and state of development of the child and the child's cultural context.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment is the ongoing process of collecting, documenting, reflecting on and using information to develop rich portraits of children as learners in order to support and enhance their future learning assessment enables the childcare professional to find out;

- *What the children understand,
- *How they think,
- *What they are able to do,
- *What their interests are.

SUPPORTING EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT THROUGH FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT.

Pg 72 Aistear Manual
www.ncca.ie

SIX KEY FEATURES OF ASSESSMENT

1. Characteristics and complexities of early learning
2. Centrality of relationships
3. Interactive process
4. Assessing what is valued
5. Authentic Assessment
6. Professional development for assessment

COMPLEXITY OF PLAY



ASSESSMENT SHOULD

- Be simple, natural and occurring on a reliable schedule
- Have ecological validity (completed in situations that are real)
- Utilise instruments that are intelligent-fair and not dependent on language or logical faculties
- Use multiple measures
- Be sensitive to individual differences. Develop levels and forms of expertise
- Use materials which are intrinsically interesting and motivating
- Yield information to be used for the learners benefit

» Shepard's guiding principles of assessment

Thinking about Assessment

- MAKING A JUDGEMENT
- RECORDING
- SHARING

Pg 72

'The starting point for assessment should be positive , what can the child do.

Completing assessment The 5 W's

- Who do we assess?
- What do we assess?
- Where do we assess?
- When do we assess?
- Why do we assess?
- How do we assess?

WHO?

- The children in our care
- Ourselves
- Support colleagues

What? The essentials of Learning

- Dispositions
- Cognitive abilities
- Emotional well-being
- Self-concept & sociability

Where & When

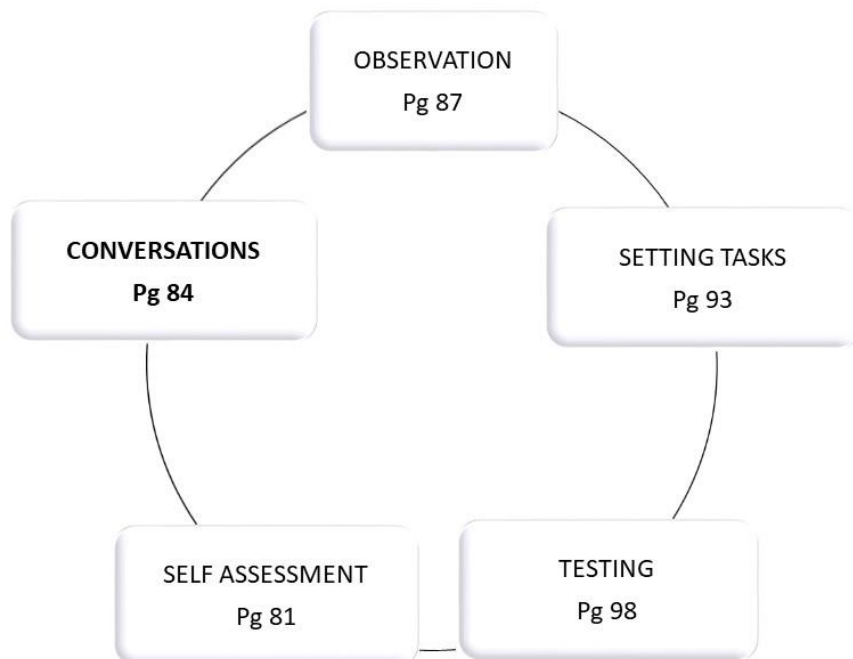
- In the early years setting
- Sometimes planned
- Sometimes impromptu

Why we assess

- To assess children's progress
- To extend children's learning
- To provide learning environments that are stimulating which encourages progression in learning
- To demonstrate accountability
- To reflect on practice

How?

Pg 80



Quotes from
SUPPORTING EARLY LEARNING AND
DEVELOPMENT THROUGH FORMATIVE
ASSESSMENT- A Research paper

- "In assessing early learning and development interaction and context are key to understanding the learning and development of the child".
- "Observation is central in assessing the learning and development of children. Its validity is likely to be enhanced if a practitioner who knows the child well, and with whom the child has established a close relationship, carries out the observation".
- Practitioners reflect on interpret their observations and use that information to support further learning".

Documentation

pg 75

1. Sample of children's work
2. Notes
3. ICT
4. Stories
5. Daily diaries or records of care
6. Checklists
7. Reports

Summary

- Know your role
- Think of Kipling's honest serving men
- Always have the Aistear themes in the back of your head.
- Keep your manual close to hand
- You are already doing some form of assessment

PARENTS



WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY DOING?

- Where are your Aistear displays?
- What information is important?
- How are you informing parents ?
- What parents typically ask?
- When do you share the information?

Guidelines for good practice **(The How)**

Four sets of guidelines

- **Building partnerships between parents & practitioners**
- Learning and developing through interactions
- Learning and developing through play
- Supporting learning and development through assessment

Building Partnerships

Partnership involves parents, families and practitioners working together to benefit children. Each recognises, respects and values what the other does and says. Partnership involves responsibility on both sides

Four ways in which parents & practitioners can work together;

- ✕ Supporting learning and development,
- ✕ Sharing Information,
- ✕ Contributing,
- ✕ Making decision and advocating different approaches and courses of action.

How do we work together Share information

- Information/notice boards/newsletters?
- Team profiles?
- Daily diaries?
- Displays/art/photo's?
- Conversations?
- Information sessions/ our curriculum?
- Induction periods for both new children and team members?

REMEMBER

A SOLID FOUNDATION - providing the children in our care with learning opportunities based on their abilities, support, encouraging and scaffolding these abilities so they become confident learners

TO ENSURE THE CHILDREN IN MY SERVICE GET ONE - I must plan, know my equipment and the children

I NEED TO DO - review my work on an ongoing basis

THE FRAMEWORKS - Support and guide me to good practice ?

THE LEGISLATORS WANT- a minimum level of practice, if I follow the guide of the frameworks I should have no issue

TO THE NEEDS OF THE PARENTS - I need to keep them informed.

8.5.3 Art and Display

Art & Display

CENTRE B
Fiona Healy
DCU PDPE/55143644

DISUCSSION

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Don't Know	Never
1. How often are Art activities carried out in the centre?					
1. How often are they carried out in the room you work in?					
1. How often do you carry out or lead the activity?					

•Art in your childcare centre is mostly (please tick all the statements you feel are true)

A group activity—everyone does it at the same time	
An individual activity—children can choose when they want to do art	
Adult Led—the adult decides what the activity will be	
Child Led—The children decide	
The art is usually decided based on the season, Valentine's Day, Christmas etc	

Do you feel there is sufficient equipment to carry out a variety of activities?

Yes ☐

No ☐

As an adult what do you like/dislike about doing art with children

Like	Dislike

ACTIVITY TIME

- Art activities

“We can best help children learn, not by deciding what we think they should learn and thinking of ingenious ways to teach it to them, but by making the world, as far as we can, accessible to them, paying serious attention to what they do, answering their questions -- if they have any -- and helping them explore the things they are most interested in.”

— [John Holt](#) — How Children Learn

ITERS/ECERS Guide

ART

- Available more than once a day – All children should be able to choose to do an art activity on a regular basis
- Children can use art materials in their own creative way.
- The types of materials available
 - Drawing
 - Painting
 - Three dimensional materials Play dough, Clay, items for gluing
 - Collage materials
 - Tools; Scissors, tape, stencils sponges brushes etc
- Available on open shelving or is set up for at least one hour per day
- Individual expression is permitted.
- More than 3 types of materials for longer than an hour per day.
- More individual expression than teacher lead sessions
- Three dimensional
- Art activities relate to other class room experiences
- Art Project work.

What is accessible ?

All of these wonderful, inspiring activities are worthless if children cannot get at them!!!!!!



'Freely Accessible' means that children should be able to get resources independently, and not have to seek permission.

- Certain resources need to be under close supervision.
 - Ground rules need to be established prior to introduction.

PROCESS OR PRODUCT?

- Think about the Art work you send home or display on the wall?
- Do you have walls covered with identical templates of varying colours?
- Are children required to do art?
- Do you use anything other than paint brushes?
- Do you do a lot of preparation for Art?
- Do you sometimes do it too, showing them a model?

TIPS

- Resist asking what it is
- Resist saying anything
- When asked “do you like my painting”? – Response “ Do you like your painting?”
- Be cautious of mindless praise.
- If parents come in and see the work and whisper “what is it” – you are on the right track 😊

Why is ART important?

- Refines fine motor movement control
- Pre-writing skill.
- Insight into how children think.
- links to reading and mathematics.
- Can be used as a method of Assessment of learning and in learning.

Functions of creativity

- Develop full range of human potential
 - improve capacity for thought, actions and communication
 - Nurture feelings and sensibilities
 - Extend physical and perceptual skills
 - Explore values, understand cultures
- (Calouste Gulbenkian)

Art is important for children especially during their early development. Research shows that art activities develop brain capacity in early childhood; in other words, art is good brain food! Art engages children's senses in open-ended play and develops cognitive, social-emotional and multi-sensory skills. As children progress into elementary school and beyond, art continues to provide opportunities for brain development, mastery, self esteem and creativity.

(Penn State Extension)

Documentation

- Enhancement of children's learning
- Taking children's ideas and work seriously
- Teacher planning and evaluation with children
- Parent appreciation and participation
- Teacher research & process awareness
- Children's learning made visible

Aistear – the Curriculum Framework

Communication

- Communication Aim 1
 - LG 6 –Express themselves creatively and imaginatively using non-verbal communication
- Communication Aim 4
 - LG2 – express themselves through the visual arts using skills such as cutting drawing, gluing, sticking, painting, building printing, sculpting and sewing
- Communication Aim 3
 - LG 5- Have opportunities to use a variety of mark making materials in an enjoyable and meaningful way

Well-Being

- Well-Being A3
 - Express themselves creatively and experience the arts

Exploring & Thinking

- ▶ Exploring & Thinking Aim3
 - ▶ Make marks and use drawing painting and model-making to record objects events and ideas

IDEAS

Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up.” – Pablo Picasso

Blackboards



Painting

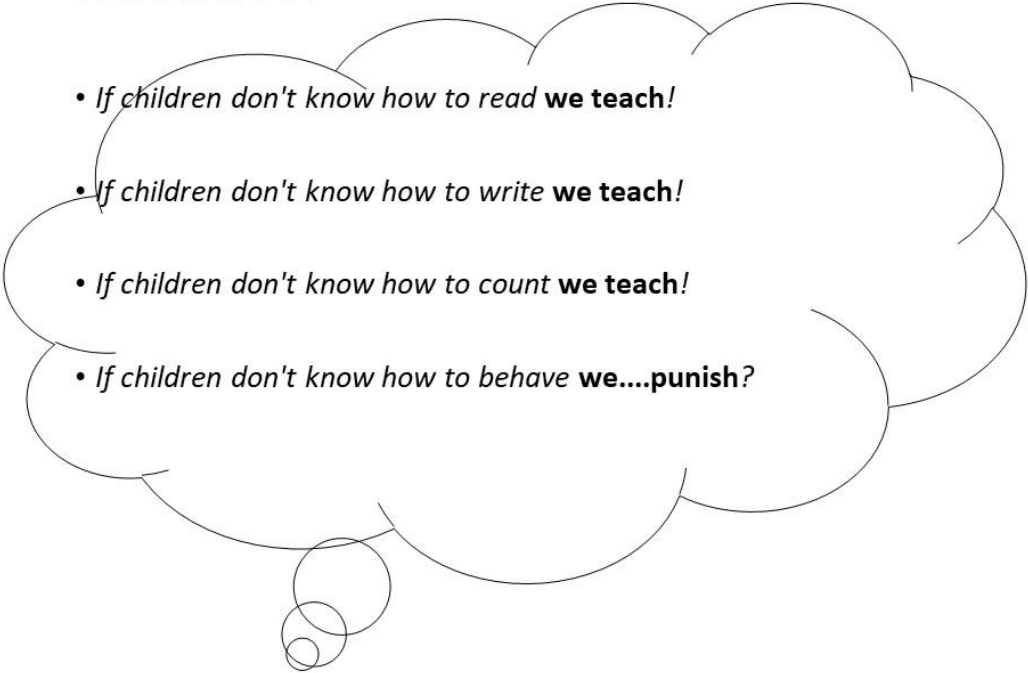


DISCUSSION

PROMOTING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

CENTRE D
Fiona Healy
DCU PDPE/55143644

Think About

- 
- *If children don't know how to read **we teach!***
 - *If children don't know how to write **we teach!***
 - *If children don't know how to count **we teach!***
 - *If children don't know how to behave **we....punish?***

CENTRE D -CURRENT POLICY

- We believe that children and adults will flourish in an environment in which everyone knows what is expected of them.
- Where the children are free to develop and learn without fear of being hurt or hindered by anyone else.
- We aim to work towards a goal where children will develop self-discipline and self-esteem in a n atmosphere of mutual respect and encouragement

Learning

- Humans are not born co-operative and don not know instinctively how to interact (Graves & Graves 1990)
- Behaviour is something we learn.
- For most young children the developmental tasks of acquiring emotional and behavioural self-regulation and social competence proceed smoothly.
- Children need to learn that their actions can have an effect on other people and so appropriate behaviour is usually about respecting other people as well
- Children with problem behaviour have a skill delay in language, social, behavioural and /or emotional. We need to teach them the skills they will need.

What is it

“Any repeated pattern of behaviour or perception of behaviour that interferes with or is at risk of interfering with optimal learning or engagement in prosocial interaction with peers and adults”. (2003 Smith & Fox)

Types of Behaviour

- Fussiness
- Withdrawal
- Anxiety
- Over activity
- Disobedience
- Tantrums
 - Screaming
 - Crying
- Aggression
 - Hitting
 - Scratching
 - Kicking

Common Responses

A child is acting out

A response may be

“Calm down – be nice, we are all friends here”.

The problem is

- Strong feelings are not calm they are usually not nice.

It is not sufficient to ask a child to exchange one set of feelings for another.

We need to acknowledge the behaviour which can compound behaviour as the needs nor the behaviour are resolved

Successful Participation

- Self Confident / Increase their self-esteem
- Relationship skills/Develop network of friends
- Self –Management
- Emotional self regulation
- Attention self regulation
- Develop their skills, confidence and ability to relate to others.

SO WHAT & WHY???

- Think of it from the child's point of view
- Why are the children displaying the behaviour
- What is the point? What do they want to achieve?
 - Obtain Something
 - Escape Something
 - Self Stimulation

PRACTICAL

- Two volunteers

STRATEGIES

Think about - What is your style?
What is the child trying to communicate and how
am I assisting them?



COMMUNICATION IS KEY

- Make sure you have the child's attention.
- Be clear and specific
- Positive reinforcement immediately
- Use visual and verbal clues
 - Visual Strategies
 - 5 minute warnings
 - Tone of voice
- Verbalising your own issues.
 - Stating what your problem is
 - Stating what you might do to fix it.

CURRENT POLICY

- Supporting & Encouraging Positive Behaviour
 - The positive will be emphasised, no and don't will be kept to a minimum.
- Nurturing positive behaviour
 - Provide a wide range of variety and quantity of play equipment.
- Managing minor behaviour problems
- A sensible approach
- Managing Moderate behaviour problems
- Managing severe & challenging behaviour problems
- ABC analysis

PRACTICAL

Using your current policy explain how you would deal with the scenario

Support Social Competence

- Positive relationships
 - This comes from positive interactions
 - The more frequent sensitive interactions, the more secure the children become
 - Warm and attentive, adults who engage and encourage the children in their care
 - Provide modelling qualities that build strong relationships
- Relationships with parents
 - Getting to know families
 - Welcoming to parents
 - Children's abilities and interests
 - Sharing of information

CLASSROOM

- Room Arrangement
- Routines
- Positive interactions
- Monitoring and redirecting
- Observations
- New skills replacing old
- Develop plans with parents
- Reviewing the plan

Setting boundaries

Setting boundaries for children give positive reinforcement and an explanation why.

Realistic Goal setting

CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR MEDIATION STEPS

- Approach Calmly
- Stop any hurtful actions
- Acknowledge children's feelings
- Gather information
- Restate the problem
- Ask for ideas for solutions
- Be prepared to give follow up support

PRACITCE NOT THEORY

- Try teaching a new skill
- Give children the tools
- Prevention
- Child's Point of view
- First – then statements
- Say what you want to see – NOT what you saw
- Use visuals
- Model
- Find solutions, assist problem solving
- Support Children
- Seek assistance from colleagues & Family
- Follow the childs lead

- Challenging behaviour is challenging
- Remind yourself you can support this child
- Early years is your strength, this is a skill learning issue

REMEMBER

Children don't misbehave
they make mistakes

8.5.5 Environments

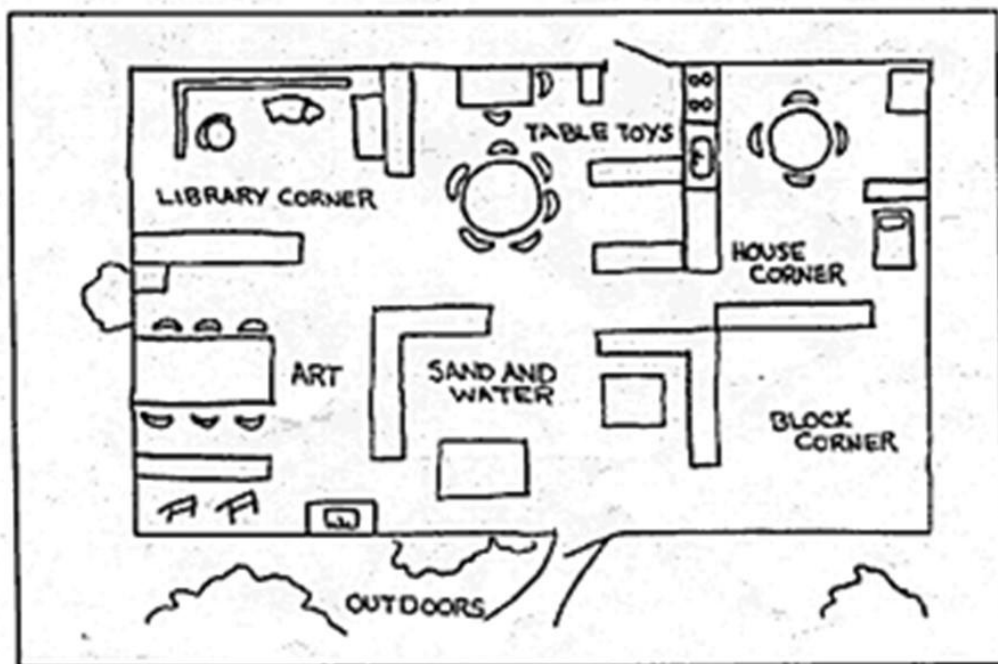
ENVIRONMENTS

Fiona Healy

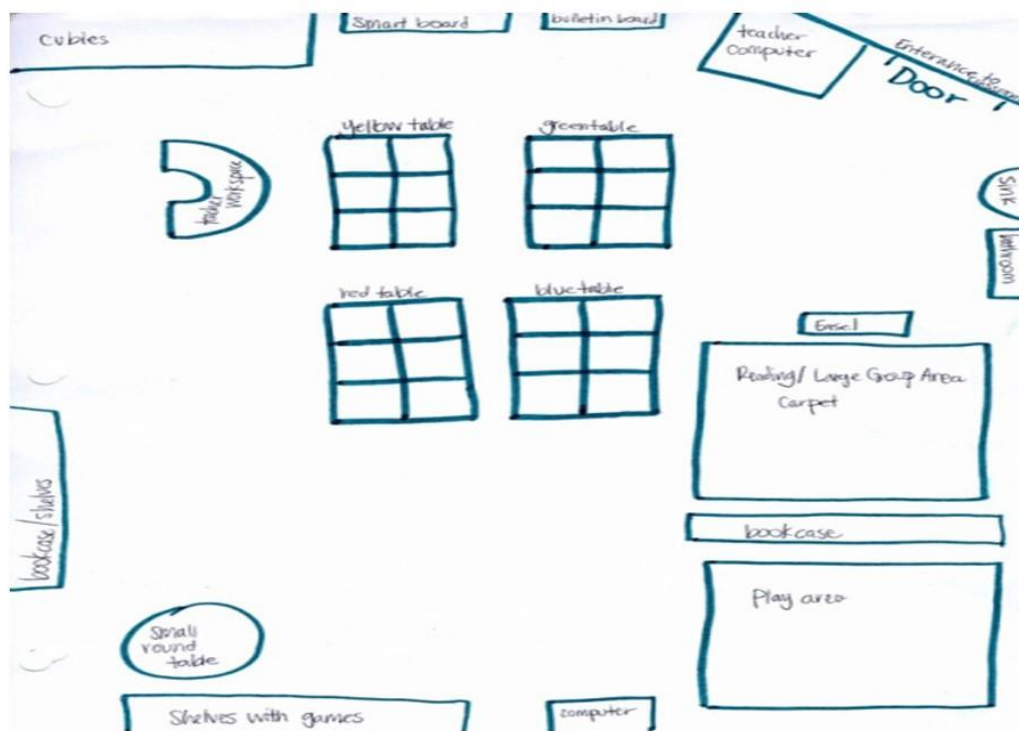
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PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

“A well arranged environment should enhance children’s development through learning and play. It facilitates classroom management and supports the implementation of curricular goals and objectives”. (Catron & Allen 2007)



Dodge & Collier 1992



The Learning Environment

Influences

- How & What we play
- Our Moods
- Ability to form relationships

Room arrangement for Play

- Materials that stimulate and support a specific type of play, such as blocks and accessories, including people and vehicles, for building; books, flannel boards, puppets and other language and literacy materials; fine motor materials, such as interlocking blocks and manipulatives; art materials for drawing, painting, collage, clay or play dough; music and movement materials, such as instruments, dance props and a CD or tape player
- Accessible storage for the materials offered in the interest centre, including low, open storage shelves, containers to keep materials that go together separated from other materials.
- Uncluttered shelves or use of picture-word labelling on the shelves and containers that children can understand, so that selection of materials and participation in clean-up become more independent.
- Suitable space to use the materials, such as a table or easel for art materials, a flat rug area for block building, a table or rug area for puzzles and other fine motor materials, an open area for music-making and movement activities, a cosy area for quiet reading or an area near water on an easy-to-clean floor for messy play, such as finger painting, sand play or a discovery table.
- A drying arrangement, where needed for products that are produced in activity areas, such as a place to dry three-dimensional clay. Play dough, or glued wood constructions, or a clothesline or rack for drying paintings or collages.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE ONE

- Think about the room you work in
- Draw your own room and the furniture in it.
- Make a list of the equipment.

Síolta

STANDARD 2 – ENVIRONMENTS

Enriching environments, both indoor and outdoor (including materials and equipment) are well-maintained, safe, available, accessible, adaptable, developmentally appropriate and offer a variety of challenging and stimulating experiences

Eight Components

Síolta

What different areas/spaces within the setting are offered to the child?

PRE-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES	
Water	
Sand	
Paint	
Art Materials/ Mark Making/Paint/Clay/Dough	
Writing area	
Play dough	
Table top	
Home Corner/ Role Play	

AISTEAR ASKS

- How do I organise and resource the spaces inside and outside? How would organising the space into distinct interest areas enhance play?
- What activities, areas toys and materials do the children and I use most often in play inside and outside? Why?
- How can I vary my role and modify the social and physical environment to ensure that all children benefit from play?
- What hands-on activities can I involve the children in?
- How can I vary my role and modify the social and physical environment to ensure that all children benefit from play?
- How can I encourage and support all children in their play – boys & girls, younger and older children, children from different backgrounds and cultures and children with special education needs.

THINK ABOUT

- Well defined spaces and areas
- Paths and Boundaries
- Adequate and meaningful resources, materials and equipment.
- Storage/ Presentation of equipment
- Opportunities for taking risk and challenge
- Welcoming space for children and their families.

Rooms layout should include

- Many Different types of interest centres for a variety of learning and play opportunities
- Play spaces that are protected from unnecessary interruptions so children can engage in activities with more concentration
- Clarity of organisation that promotes independence and care for the environment.
- Places to play and learn in smaller groups with a friend or individually

PRACTICAL

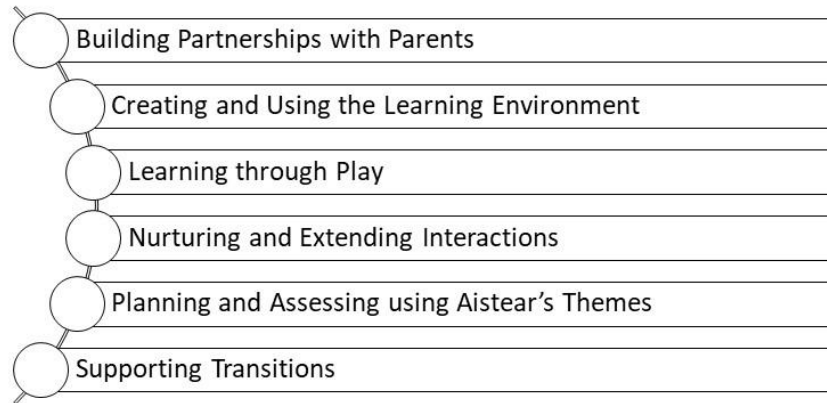
- Review you drawing
- Do you think it needs to be changed around to include space for privacy and accessibility ?
- How could you change it?
- What could you do?

Check List

- Are there visual boundaries, making it apparent to children where learning areas stop and start?
- Is each area of interest separate in its one entity and area?
- Are the messy play areas near sinks
- Are there any blind spots
- Are there any areas of Privacy
- Can children access their belongings/ aprons/ coats etc

AISTEAR/SIOLTA PRACTICE GUIDE

- Six Curriculum Pillars



Fireplace used as a space for privacy.



8.5.6 Equality and Diversity

Equality & Diversity

Fiona Healy
Dublin City University
Centre B

DEFINITIONS

- Diversity' refers to:

The diverse nature of Irish society for example in terms of social class, gender, returned Irish emigrants, family status, minority groups and the majority group.

- 'Equality' refers to:

The importance of recognising different individual needs and of ensuring equity in terms of access, participation and benefits for all children and their families. It is therefore not about treating people the 'same'.

Acceptance of Diversity

Instead of viewing difference as negative they are seen as strengths, adding more flavour to life, allowing all to contribute in unique ways. Children learn that differences among groups exist and can be respected and enjoyed rather than feared and disliked.

Policy

Do you have an equality Policy?

What does it say?

What does it mean to you everyday practice?

YOUR ROLE

- Critically reflecting on your own attitudes and values and how they influence children
- trying out new policies; actions and practices
- learning from mistakes
- ongoing reflection on one's own and others' difficulties
- imaginatively thinking of new ways to work including exercises and activities
- continually questioning and reviewing the process

STEROTYPING

food for thought

Pink for a boy?

'An article in the trade publication, Earnshaw's Infants' Department, in June 1918 said: 'The generally accepted rule is pink for the boys, and blue for the girls. The reason is that pink, being a more decided and stronger colour, is more suitable for the boy, while blue, which is more delicate and dainty, is prettier for the girl.' From then until the 1940s, pink was considered appropriate for boys because being related to red it was the more masculine and decided colour, while blue was considered appropriate for girls because it was the more delicate and dainty colour, or related to the Virgin Mary. Since the 1940s, the societal norm was inverted; pink became considered appropriate for girls and blue appropriate for boys, a practice that has continued into the 21st century.'

Source: The Smithsonian Magazine 8.4.201

Approaches to inclusion

- Assimilation
- Integration
- Multicultural
- Intercultural
- Anti-bias Approach

Assimilation

- The Assimilation educational approach holds that;
- Western child-rearing practices are superior and should therefore be adopted by all.
- assumes that minority groups are deficient, deprived and lacking in cultural capital.
- To 'assimilationists' the absorption of minorities into the dominant culture was believed to be necessary for the socialisation of all into a shared value system and therefore essential for progress.

Integration

- The Integration educational approach acknowledges the need for economic and social support for minorities to help their integration into society.
- the emphasis is on the integration of minorities into the majority culture.
- They have to change and adapt to succeed within the system. The system is fine.
- Integration has been criticised for being patronising and dismissive of other cultures and for being racist.

Multicultural

- The Multicultural educational approach celebrates difference.
- It focuses on the minority cultures and specifically on their 'exotic' aspects, glossing over issues of racism and unequal power relations.
- It sets out to change negative attitudes and practices of the majority population and holds the belief that if children are exposed to other cultures at an early stage they are unlikely to develop prejudiced ideas.
- Multicultural education has tended to be implemented in settings where there are children from minorities and can fail to adequately address issues of power and discrimination.

Intercultural

- The Intercultural education approach contends that culture and equity are not just minority issues but also majority issues.
- assisting all people to become aware of their own culture and to remove the blinkers which hinder their ability to reflect on diversity issues.
- It promotes the necessity for diversity to be incorporated across all areas of the curriculum. Most importantly it acknowledges the need to critique racism and power relations and challenge stereotyping.

Which is best way and how do we begin???

Brief Summary

- Assimilation-My way is the high way??
- Integration-Join us we are the majority!!!!
- Multicultural—celebrates difference but mainly focuses on minorities (avoids the negatives)
- Intercultural-looks at all culture , challenges racism, stereotypes.

Anti-Bias Approach- Is the way to go!!!

- The Anti-bias approach has been developed specifically for early childhood education.
- It focuses on addressing inequalities, sources of stereotypes and power issues in society.
- However, this approach is broader in its focus as it addresses all the 'isms'. The approach identifies four goals, which build upon one another: nurturing each child's confident group and self identity, fostering empathy, encouraging critical thinking and developing skills to stand up for oneself and others in difficult situations.
- The aim is to empower all children and assist them in their paths towards self-determination. The goals are applicable to adults and children.

4 Goals of Anti-Bias Approach

Children

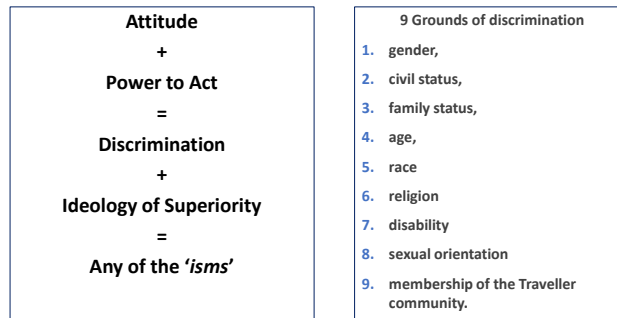
- **To support children's identity and sense of belonging.**
- **To support children to become comfortable with difference.**
- **To foster each child's critical thinking about bias.**
- **To empower children to stand up for them selves and others in the face of bias.**

Adults

- **To be conscious of one's own culture, attitudes and values and how they influence practice.**
- **To be comfortable with difference, and engage effectively with families.**
- **To engage in critical thinking about bias and discrimination.**
- **To engage confidently in dialogue around issues of bias and discrimination.**

OMC (2006) Diversity and Equality Guidelines for Childcare Providers. Dublin: Office of the Minister for Children.

Formula for any of the 'isms'



Legislative Framework

- The Irish Constitution (1937) (Bunreacht na h'Eireann)
- UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1963)
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965)
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- Child Care Act 1991 including Child Care (Pre-school Services) Regulations 2006
- Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004
- Children First Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of children (1999)
- Equal Status Act 2000 to 2011
- National Children's Strategy 2000 -2010
- Children Act 2001
- Ombudsman for Children Act 2002
- The Official Languages Act 2003
- Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004.
- Disability Act 2005

Terminology

- Group Exercise
- It is easy to say the wrong thing if you don't know the right thing!!
- Words- think about what it means to you.

Equality Proofing your environment

- Stereotypical equipment
- Show diversity
- Avoid Prejudice
- Non-stereotypical roles
- Include Props
- Including diversity into daily curriculum



Activities to promote inclusion & Diversity



Activities for Inclusion and Diversity



Family Wall



All about me books



Self Portraits



Ideas

PROPS

- ▶ Dress up clothes
- ▶ Puppets
- ▶ Small toy people
- ▶ Play food
- ▶ Baby carriers
- ▶ Play money
- ▶ Equipment used by people with disabilities

Routines

- Ethnic foods served as part of the weekly/daily menu.
- Different music played for children to dance to
- Children learn dances from other countries.
- Team members can say hello/goodbye in a couple of languages

National Frameworks-Síolta & Aistear

- Síolta
- Standard 2: Environments
- Standard 3: Parents and Families
- Standard 14: Identity and Belonging

- Aistear themes
- Well-being
- Identity and Belonging
- Communicating
- Exploring and Thinking

How do we support the Anti Bias Goals

- Observe what you already have.
- Identify any bias present in the environment.
- Identify the diversity present amongst the children in the setting.
- Assess the relevance of the present images for your particular group of children.
- Take care in introducing new materials to children and provide support.
- Monitor children's use of materials and equipment on an ongoing basis.
- Make your own materials using real photo's, children's art, magazines etc.

Step by Step to Proofing your environment
Group Activity 2

Step 1:

Choose a child in your early childhood service. Think about that child in terms of his or her:

- Gender
- Family structure
- Religion
- Physical appearance
- Special learning needs or disability

Also think about

- Where they live
- The culture and community to which they belong
- language spoken in the child's home
- Any other aspect of their identity.

Step 2:

The next step is to walk through every room in your setting with this child in mind. Look at the images on the walls, all the materials used in the different activity areas (home corner, art area, music area, book area etc.)

- a. Where and how this child is represented
- b. Where and how this child is not represented

Step 3:

- Discuss these observations with your team, comparing the information about the child and your observation.
- Reflect on how the physical environment looks now and what can be done to make improvements

Step 4:

Identify any changes you can make to the environment that will benefit this child, materials with images that will reflect this child in a positive way. Can you suggest changes to reflect the child's background, language, family or community that will:

- a. Support the child's individual identity
- b. Encourage a sense of belonging.

Don't go mad !!!!

Points to remember

- You do not need to remove all biased materials. It can be useful to discuss '*what's fair or unfair*' – and so encourage critical thinking.
- There are many ways to be resourceful when budgets are tight. Make preschool books, library, families can be a great resource with information, home language including books and music, clothes for dress up etc.
- Don't be tokenistic- Dress up box , national dress, props etc.
- Use real images of the children, if it truly is all about them let them see themselves



Resources

- List of suppliers of Diversity and Equality resources
- List of books
- Examples of diverse equipment, books dolls, markers, paint.
- Diversity and Equality Guidelines for childcare providers

8.5.7 Music

MUSIC & MOVEMENT

CENTRE B

Fiona Healy

DCU PDPE/55143644

ACTIVITY ONE

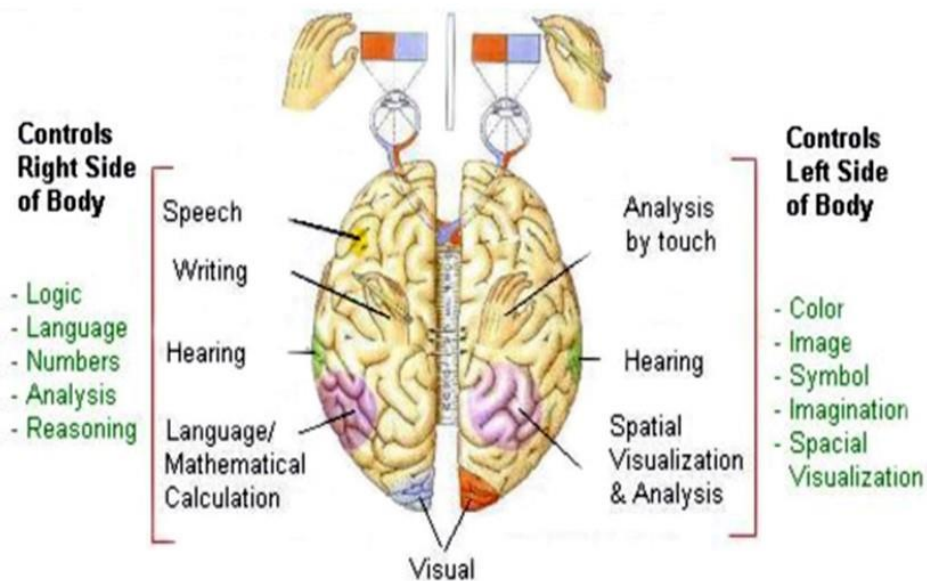
TOP TEN

MUSIC/MOVEMENT

- Music includes both producing and listening to music.
Producing music includes singing, chants, nursery rhymes
- Movement includes dancing, marching or exercising to music or rhythms or actin out the content of songs, rhymes or chants with large muscle body actions.

“the imaginary world, the dream world, is a private place where children can sort out ideas before actually implementing those ideas”

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT



A child's awareness of music begins very early

Comforting, Music boxes, music toys

Clapping, dancing parading

Young children are sensitive to musical sound and respond freely and joyfully to different tempos and beats



Why is Music Important

- Mental capacity and intellect. There is a connection between music and the development of mathematical thinking. Mathematical concepts are developed as children sing counting songs.
- Mastery of the physical self. Children develop coordination, which aids muscular development. They begin to understand what they can do with their bodies as they run, balance, stretch, crawl, and skip.
- Development of the affective aspect. Through music and movement, children learn acceptable outlets to express feelings and relieve tension. Music may also convey a specific mood through which children reveal their feelings and emotions.
- Development of creativity. Music can create an imaginary world that stimulates a child's creativity. A box can become a drum, a stick can be transformed into a horn, or a broom can become a dance partner. Children make up songs or give new words to old songs for pure enjoyment.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

- Smith (1963) found that vocal training is appropriate for 3 and 4 year olds and results in a significant increase in singing ability.
- Sergeant and Roche (1973) found that attention to absolute pitch was greatest among 3 and 4 year olds, and was diminished among 5 and 6 year olds. Thus, the critical period for development of absolute pitch may have already passed by the time children reach elementary school.
- Cohen and Baird (1990) built upon this research by making an analogy between the early acquisition of categories for speech sounds and pitch.
- Rutkowski (1996) discovered that individual and small group singing instruction during the entire Kindergarten year improved children's singing ability and developmental music aptitude.
- Levinowitz, Barnes, Guerrini, Clement, D'April and Morey (1998) found that the number of New Jersey elementary students who can sing in tune has dropped 33% over the last twenty years leading her to conclude that children's musical interests should be supported in the early years in order to flourish (Hoffman, 2008).
- Pond's (1980) studies on the spontaneous music making of children during the 1930s and 1940s. Through extensive observation of young children in a naturalistic context, Pond determined that young Pond determined that young children's musical experiences are primarily based on the discovery of sound, and that social, environmental, and procedural conditions for children's music making should be carefully planned and observed.
- Burton (2002) demonstrated that the spontaneous songs of young children are reflections of their capacity to organize musical ideas in relationship to their surrounding environments.

Developmentally Appropriate

Appropriate

- Having a repertoire of songs to sing.
- Having musical instruments
- Various cultures are included
- Music is integrated
- All elements of music are discussed (pitch, tempo, volume.
- Children are encouraged to use their full bodies

Think about???

- Do you rarely return to a song or dance
- You only offer the ones they enjoy the most.
- You don't participate
- Music is a separate activity only.
- Do you get the 'performing' children to do most of the singing etc
- There is no movement allowed with the music

AISTEAR

- Well Being

Aim 2 Goal 1; Gain increasing control and co-ordination of their body movements

Aim 3 Goal 1: Express themselves creatively and experience the arts

- Communication

Aim 1 Goal 6: Express themselves creatively and imaginatively using non-verbal communication

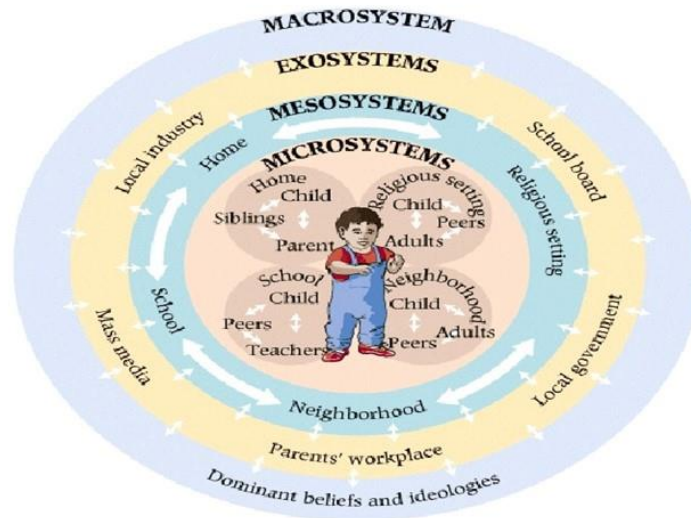
Aim 2 Goal 2: use sound pattern, rhythm and repetition in language

What have you got in your room?

- Do you encourage creativity in Music?
- Do you set up the activities to allow children to do things in their own way?
- Do the children have concerts for you, is this something you support.

PARENTS !!!!

Bronfenbrenner Ecological System



AISTEAR

Partnership **involves** parents, families and practitioners **working together** to **benefit children**.

Each **recognises**, **respects** and **values** what **the other** does and says.
Partnership involves **responsibility**.

Key Stakeholders

- The parents
- The service
- The early years professional
- The child

HOW DO WE INVOLVE SKAKEHOLDERS

- We follow our policy
- What does it say
- What should it say
- Have we included all the stakeholders?
- ????????

Activity

- What are the best methods of communication for the messages we need to send and receive.

How do we work together Share information

- Information/notice boards/newsletters?
- Team profiles?
- Daily diaries?
- Displays/art/photo's?
- Conversations?
- Information sessions/ our curriculum?
- Induction periods for both new children and team members?

Publications

- Barnardos – Partners in Learning
- Barnardos – Supporting quality, guideline for professional practice in early childhood services, Book 1
- Barnardos – A practical guide to developing childcare policies

8.5.8 Policies and Procedures

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Why P&P's

- Promote best practice
- Standardise practice and service delivery
- Ensure that legislative and regulatory requirements are met
- Ensure employees and line managers are clear on their roles and responsibilities
- Facilitate effective staff induction
- Act as educational tools
- Act as a basis for audit and evaluation

Your Responses to Your P&P's

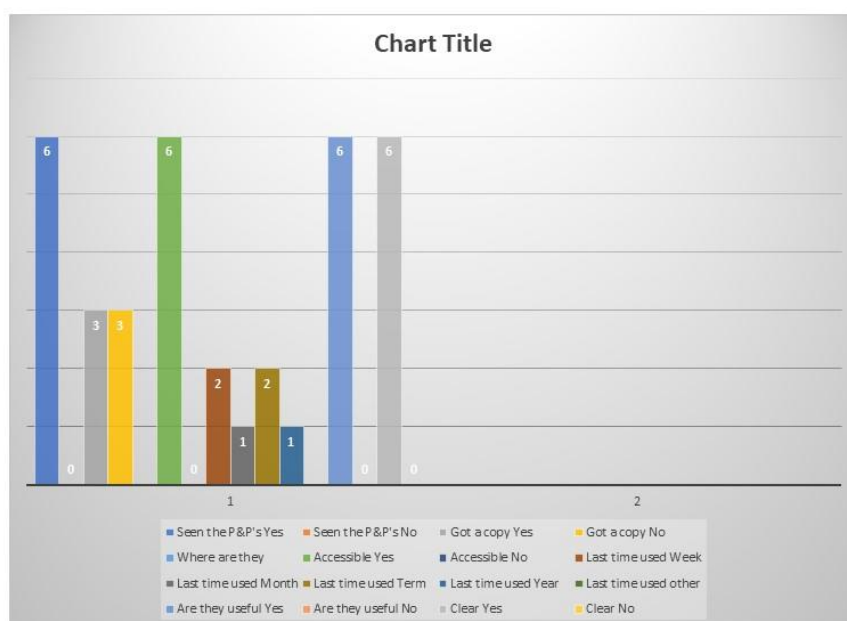
1. Have you seen the P&P's for Montessori Story? Yes /No
2. Have you got a copy? Yes /No
3. If no where are they kept?

4. Are they freely accessible? Yes /No
5. When was the last time you used them to follow a procedure in work?
6. Last Week Last Month Last Term Last year
Other _____
7. Do you think the Policies & Procedures are useful? Yes /No
8. Do you think the current procedures are clear to follow Yes /No
9. If you answered no please explain how they might be made clearer.

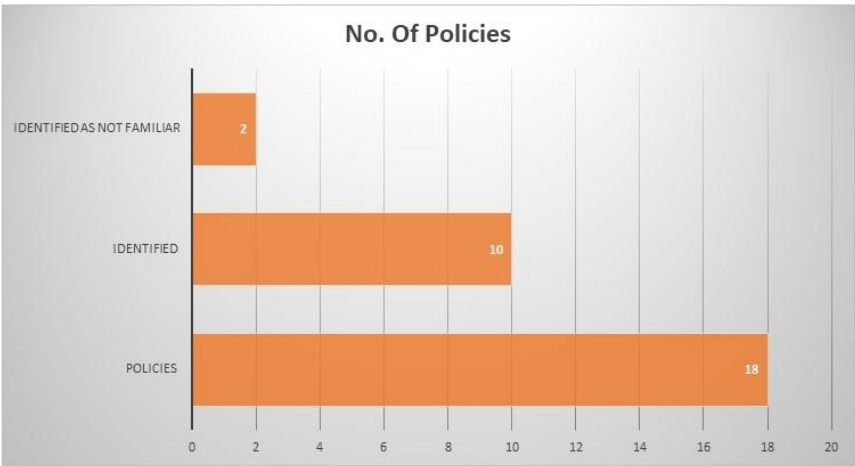
10. List the policies that you know and the ones you are not so familiar with

Known	Not Familiar

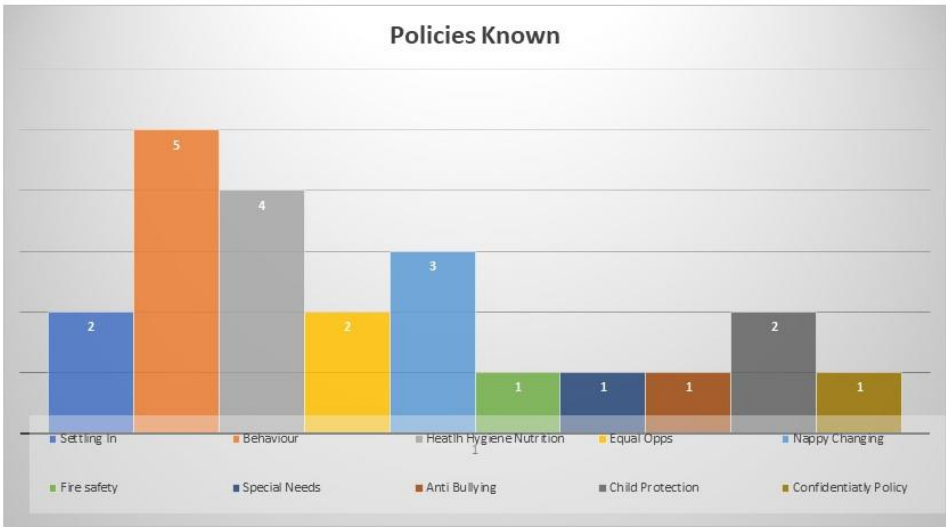
SURVEY RE P&P's



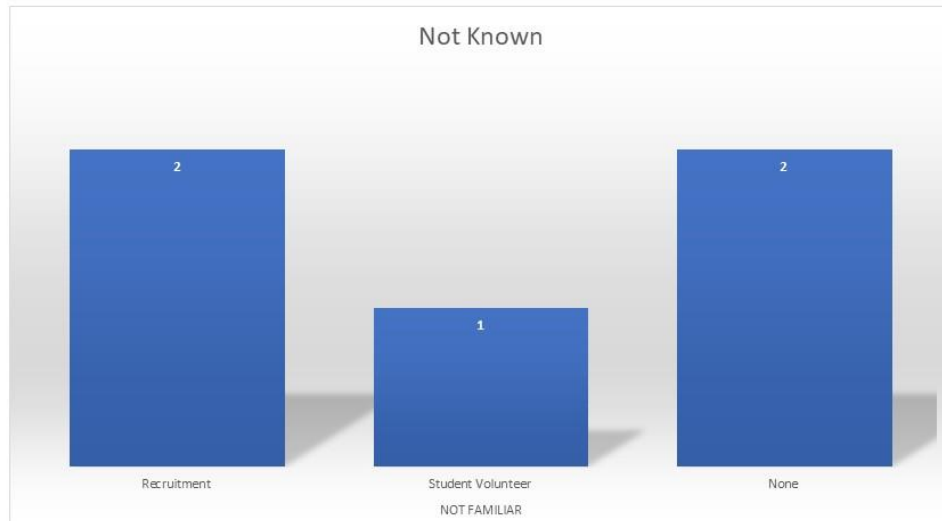
Survey Re Policies



Survey Re Policies



Survey Re Policies



Full List of Policies and Procedures
➤ Admission Policy
➤ Anti-Bias Policy
➤ Settling In Policy
➤ Equality Opportunities
➤ Child Protection
➤ Fire Safety
➤ Partnership with Parents
➤ Outdoor Play
➤ Planning and Evaluation
➤ Personal Care
➤ Nappy Changing
➤ Health Hygiene & Nutrition
➤ Sun Protection
➤ Special Needs
➤ Respect and Dignity in the workplace
➤ Recruitment Policy
➤ Disciplinary Procedure
➤ Volunteer Recruitment

Practical Exercise

- Design a Policy on Partnership with Parents
 - Siolta
 - Aistear
- Policy is the statement
- Procedure is what are the steps

REMBEMBER

- Developing our own case studies. (Reflective practice)

BEHAVIOUR

- CASE STUDIES
 - What would you do?
 - What should you do?
 - What does the policy say I should do?
 - Do I do more?
 - Do I do less?

Design a case study

- Think of an incident that you had to deal with and the steps you took.

8.5.9 Programme Structure

Programme Structure

CENTRE D
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DCU PDPE/55143644

What is desired is that the teacher cease being a lecturer, satisfied with transmitting ready made solutions; his role should rather be that of a mentor stimulating initiative and research. (PIAGET)

BALANCE !?!?!?!?

A schedule that is too RIGID

- ignores flexibility in time that is needed during the day to meet the individual needs of children
- may rarely allow children to satisfactorily complete activities at their own pace.
- May not allow for any individual differences in completing routines (Toileting)

A schedule that is too FLEXIBLE

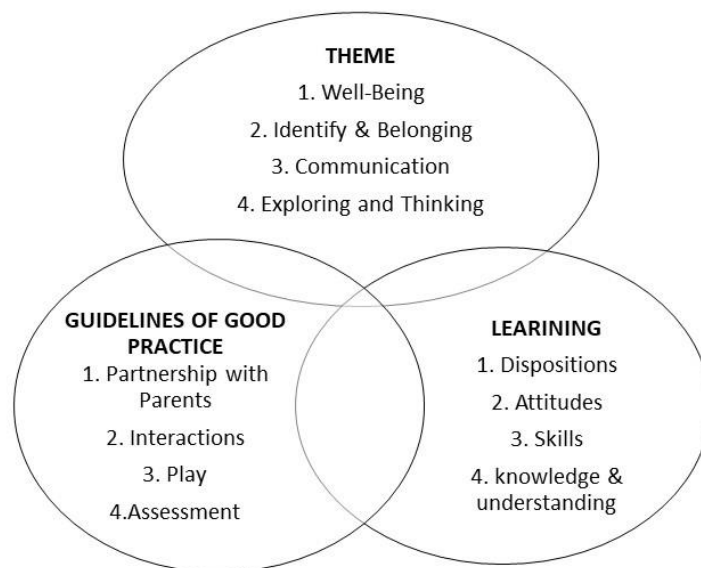
- Provides too little dependability or structure
- Children will have no idea what is supposed to happen
- Staff will be uncertain
- Classroom may be chaotic

A BALANCE OF STRUCTURE AND FLEXIBILITY MEANS THAT THE BASIC SCHEDULE IS SET AND EVERYONE CAN DEPEND ON IT. YET IT CAN BE CHANGED AND MODIFIED.

	ADULT ROLE	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:00-9:10 Welcome	Greet parents & Children, exchange information. Help child with belongings	Welcome Children and their families, assisting with belongings and saying goodbye to parents/guardians (WB A1 G1 I&B A2 G1&2)				
9:10 -10:30 Free-Play	Ensure the environment is equipped, appropriately. Carry out assessments. Observe activities and areas of interest. Engage with the children	Child led play- Free Choice Individual or group (WB A4 I&B A3) Pincher Jigsaws can be put away, used for individual learning plans for concentration skills.				
10:00 -10:30 Adult introduced/ supported individual activity	Individual plans – assist the child with areas that may need support based on assessments	This activity will be chosen by the adult to support, develop and scaffold each child's individual learning. For example fine motor skills with table top activities, knobbed jigsaws, peg boards, threading etc				
10:30 -10:45 Snack Time	Assist the children at snack time – displaying good hygiene and social skills.	Children will be asked to wash their hands and find a seat at the table. When there is any preparation children will be included in the activity (for example peeling of fruit, distributing cups sharing etc). Cleaning up time, washing of hands and toileting. (WB A2G2,G4 &G6)				
10:45 -11:25 Project work	Have the activity ready and ensure all children who wish to be are involved.	Our weeks Theme. The approach may changed during the week, Health Professions. This week is 'The Doctor'. Introduce who the Doctor is, what they do, what to expect when you visit the doctor etc Materials required; Relevant Books about Doctor trips, Hospital visits etc. Dress up, doctor outfits, nurse outfits Doctor sets, old thermometers, bandages, plasters, small torches, lollipop sticks etc. Home corner arrange furniture with children to resemble a doctors surgery or hospital. Etc (I&B A2 G5&G6)				
11:25 -11:30 Tidy up	Assist the children with the tidy up	Children are encouraged to tidy up after themselves.				
11:30 – 11:55 Circle time	Get into a circle – not a semi-circle and engage with the children asking questions to stimulate conversation. (Listening and recording)	This time is used to reflect on the days activities. The children are given opportunities to share their experiences. It is also use for story telling, developing language and communication.(CA4G5 ETA3G4) We singing songs, do action rhymes, play instruments have musical movement.				
11:55 -12:00 Home Time	Tidy up what toys remain out, if a child needs to complete a task give them warning assist the children collect their belongings,	Tidy up time – Finish off work, collect belongings				

QUICK AISTEAR REVIEW

AISTEAR FRAMEWORK



THEMES

✕ **Well-Being**

✕ **Identify & Belonging**

✕ **Communication**

✕ **Exploring & Thinking**

Each Theme has 4 aims and each aim has 6 goals.

The essentials of Learning

- Dispositions
- Cognitive abilities
- Emotional well-being
- Self-concept & sociability

Range of interaction strategies Child Lead & Adult Lead learning

Building Relationships	Facilitating	Organising	Directing
Children learn by being with others.	Children learn by being involved in making choices and decisions and by feeling in control	Children learn in a well planned well resourced environment	Children learn through planned and guided activities which build on their interests and experiences

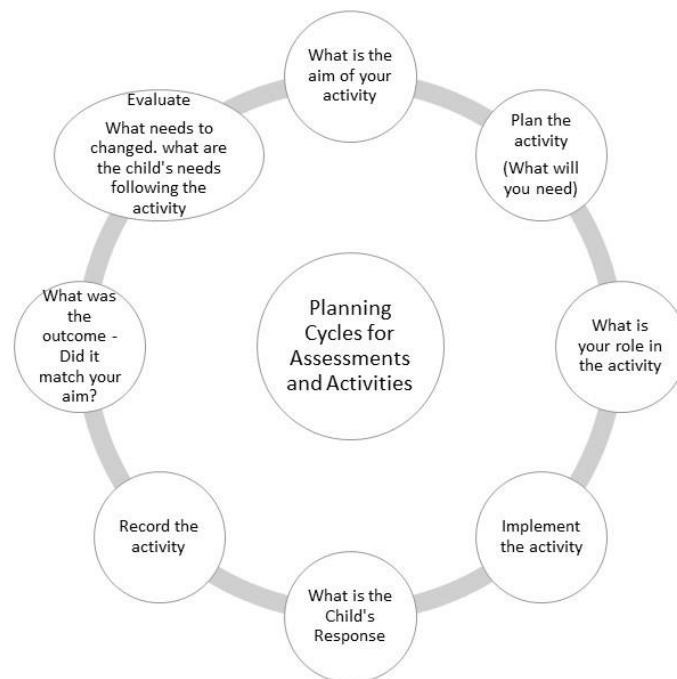
PLANNING

Long Term	Determine your learning outcomes
	Choose your Themes
	Organise your resources
Medium Term	Planning your months based on your <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes • Themes • Resources
Short Term	Weekly Review of Daily routine
Individual Learning Plan	Individual assessments Every 4/6 weeks

MEDIUM TERM PLAN

MONTH	LEARNING AREA	ACTIVITIES	RESOURCES
SEPT	<p>TRANSITIONS</p> <p>Aistear: Well Being A1 G3</p> <p>Síolta: Standard 13:Component 13.1</p> <p>CHANGE</p> <p>Aistear: Well Being A4 G1</p> <p>Síolta: Standard 6</p> <p>IDENTITY</p> <p>Aistear: Identity & Belonging A1 G2</p> <p>Síolta: Standard 14</p> <p>Component 14.2</p> <p>LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>Aistear: A1 G1-6</p>	<p>INDUCTION –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting to know you Getting to know us <p>PROFILE –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All about Me All about the pre-school Familiarise with environment <p>OUR COMMUNITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Themed Projects People & Places <p>GROWING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planting seeds 	<p>Photographs</p> <p>Pictures</p> <p>Arts & Crafts materials – Mind Maps</p> <p>Books about</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> people and places settling in Starting new things <p>Dress up clothes</p> <p>Dolls & teddy's</p> <p>Items for areas of interest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Playground Shops School <p>Gardening Equipment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeds Pots Compost
OCT	<p>SEASONAL CHANGE</p> <p>Aistear: Exploring & Thinking A1 G4</p> <p>Síolta: Standard 6</p> <p>SAFETY</p> <p>Aistear: Well- Being A2 G5</p> <p>LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>Aistear; Communication A3 G1-6</p>	<p>HARVEST & HIBERNATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On the Farm Food Animals that hibernate <p>TYPES OF SAFETY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Themed project on different emergency services Home safety Road Safety – Beep Beep Stranger Safety <p>HALLOWEEN</p>	<p>Books on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farms, Animals that hibernate Where food comes from Growing - <p>Equipment to turn home corner into a Hospital</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doctors Bag White Coat Medical Charts Plastic bottles & Measure spoons. <p>Arts & Crafts materials for Halloween decorations</p> <p>Gardening – Harvesting our cress.</p>

Planning Activities



PLANNING CYCLE



WHAT?

Activities

- Exploring
- Making discoveries
- Talking
- Problem solving
- Making choices
- Social activities
- Playing alone
- Interactions
- Having tantrums
- Behaviours

Children

- Facial Expressions
- Gestures
- Body Language
- Vocalisations
- Spoken words
- Actions,
- Their creations

ASSESSMENTS The TOOLS OF OPERATION

- What are the Learning opportunities for the child/ren?
- Think about their dispositions, their skills, their attitudes and values and their knowledge and understanding.
- Methods to be used. Aistear identifies Five
 - Self-assessment (Reflection what. how etc)
 - Conversations (engaging with the children)
 - Observations (watching & listening)
 - Setting tasks (Learn by doing)
 - Testing (achieved milestones?)

SELF -ASSESSMENT

- This involves the children thinking about their own learning.
- Make Children part of the planning
(High/Scope Plan Do Review.)
- Make it part of the routine
- Revisit the days activities and events
- Listen to their plans

Self Assessment questions

SEQUENCE OF QUESTIONS

What Who Where When Why How Solve Problem

Children's understanding of 'question words' follow a developmental pattern.

- **What** is this?
 - Asking what an object is
- Understanding of **Who**
 - Who is in your picture
- Understanding of **Where**
 - Where is the doll
- Understanding of **When**
 - What did you do when
- Understanding **Why** questions
 - Why was it difficult to get the bottles to float?
- Make an inference, understanding of **How** questions
 - How did you do that?
- Solve a problem
 - I wonder how we could.....

CONVERSATIONS

Talking about what we are doing and thinking.

- Exploring ideas
- find out why
- Opportunity for positive feedback

OBSERVATIONS

- Three different types
 - Targeted
Observing one child over time
 - Time
Observing children frequently for a few minutes at a time
 - Event
Observing children over time at an event or activity.

SETTING TASKS

- Children learn by doing
- Designing (planning) activities to gather information on specific aspects of learning and development.
- The tasks should be explained to the children, it should be designed/planned so that they will capture children's interest and excite them

TESTING

- Used mainly in the primary school system.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Be objective.
- Background information.
- What was the aim of the assessment?
- What was the area of development?
- Are you making any recommendations?
- What did you learn?

ACTIVITY

- Objectivity
 - M is crying, his face is screwed up and he is rubbing his eyes
 - M is unhappy and tired
 - M is a clever child. He is good at computers and is looking please with himself
 - M is looking at the computer, now presses the right key, looks up to check and smiles.
 - M has a temper and hates everybody

SHORT TERM

ACTIVITY : STORY SACKS –Part of our circle time			
Well-Being	Identity & Belonging	Communicating	Exploring & Thinking
		X	X
AIM/s : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children will express themselves creatively and imaginatively (CA4) Children will explore ways to represent ideas, feelings thoughts, objects and actions through symbols. (E&TA3) 			
LEARNING GOAL/S: Respond to and create literacy experiences through story, poetry song and drama. (CG5) Express feelings thoughts and ideas through improvising ,moving, playing talking, writing, story-telling, music and art. (E&TG4)			
Links to other activities: Arts and crafts WBA3 G1; I&B A3 G3, E&T A 3 G1			
Babies (0-18mts)	Toddlers (12 mts – 36 mts)	Pre-school Children (2.5 -5yrs)	Primary School (5yrs +)
		X	
Description: We have made our own Story Sack for our “Brown Bear book. The story sack will be used during group time and at individual time. Group Activity When the childcare professional uses the story sack they will stimulate vocabulary and the challenge the children through questions about the book and its content. They will discuss the book, the story and the props in terms of every day everyday life and activities. The children will be encouraged to tell the story themselves with the aid of the props, support them to use the language used during group time.			
Disposition: Build Confidence, Develop creativity			
Skills: Develop language skills, verbal communication skills, story telling skills			
Attitudes & Values: promote reading, listening to and respecting others.			
Knowledge & Understanding: Comprehension will be encourage through individual and group interpretation . Making sense of reality through stories. Exploring new ideas and concepts.			

Activity; Making Play dough – Part of our group activity			
Well-Being	Identity & Belonging	Communicating	Exploring & Thinking
X		X	X
<p>AIM/s :</p> <p>Children will be creative and spiritual (WBA3)</p> <p>Children will broaden their understanding of the world by making sense of experiences through language(CA3)</p> <p>Children will learn about and make sense of the world around them. (E&TA1)</p>			
<p>LEARNING GOAL/S:</p> <p>Children will express themselves through a variety of types of play (WBG2)</p> <p>Develop counting skills, and a growing understanding of the meaning and use of numbers and mathematical language in an enjoyable meaningful way (C G6)</p> <p>Children will come to understand concepts such as matching, comparing, ordering, sorting, size, weight, height, length, capacity and money in an enjoyable way (E&TG6)</p>			
Links to other Activities; Playing with the dough. (E&T A3G1)			
Babies (0-18mts)	Toddlers (12 mts – 36 mts)	Pre-school Children (2.5 -5yrs)	Primary School (5yrs +)
		X	
<p>Description: We will make play dough with the children. This will be a group activity session. We will stimulate language, numeracy and social skills by engaging the children from the start. All the utensils and ingredients will be clearly identified and their use discussed. The quantities of each ingredient will be identified and measured out by the children, adult support will be provided where necessary. The process of what is happening to the individual ingredients will be discussed as they transform within the mixture.</p>			
Disposition: develop curiosity & concentration			
Skills: Develop counting skills, measuring skills , mathematical skills , muscle movements, hand eye co-ordination			
Attitudes & Values: Develop positive attitude to working with others and co-operation			
Knowledge & Understanding: Develop knowledge of pre-science what happens when two or more substances are combined. Understanding of measurements and volumes.			

SAMPLE TOOL OF ASSESSMENT

Service Name.....
 Child's Name:.....Date:.....
 Assessment method.....
 Planned /impromptu activity Follow-up / new activity

CODE: PSFH/AIBS/13/0312

Description of activity; You can include a written description of what happened. A story board of photographs. A transcript of a conversation. Your post-it note. Child's drawing.

Reflection Key learning competencies	Identify your dispositions, skills , attitudes & values and Knowledge & understanding
Siolta Standard	
Siolta Component	
Aistear theme;	
Aistear Aim;	
Aistear Goal: (Learning Goal)	
Support & development identified:	
Parents Comments	
Childs Comments:	

PRACTICAL

Working in pairs, plan an activity

- STORIES
- MUSIC
- MARK MAKING
- IMAGINATIVE PLAY – SMALL DOLL PLAY
- FLASH CARDS

Role Play

Two of you be the Early Years Professionals

- One to lead
- One to observe
- The remainder be Children.
- Carry out the activity as you would in your setting.

ASSESS

- Review the activity.
- Comment on how you felt the activity went and if the plan needs to be tweaked

OR

- Has it identified other areas of interest
- The 'Children' to comment on how they felt the activity they were involved in went

THINGS THAT WILL IMPACT ON THE ASSESSMENT

- Children's interest
- Discussion that took off in another direction
- Not going to plan
 - Not what was originally intended
 - Lost in translation
 - Task too ambitious/ not ambitious enough

SUMMARY

DETERMINE YOUR LEARNING OUTCOMES & YOUR LONG TERM PLAN	In order to outline the learning programme for the children and make sense for his or her developmental stage. Know the ages and stages of development. Decide on the skills and knowledge that are important to the ethos of your service.
CHOOSE THEMES	After you have established learning outcome. Decide on themes. Ideas for themes can be; Seasonal (Autumn, Winter, Spring, Summer, holidays, festivals, events e.g. St Patricks Day) OR The themes can introduce subjects, Places, People, Animals (The Shoe Shop, The Doctors, Dinosaurs) Remember to link them to your outcomes.
ORGANISE YOUR RESOURCES	Choose the activities, songs, poems, games, crafts to go with your theme. Gather your activities, book titles, craft projects, booklists, and other resources Set up folders as you go, labelling and record what you need for each theme
MEDIUM TERM PLANS	Medium Term plans help you to stay focused. By laying out on paper , <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the plan is clear, you can easily identify activities know in advance what you will need and where to find them.
SHORT TERM PLANS	This can be carried out weekly –using your long & medium term plans as your template. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include your weekly notes/assessments Include your evaluations Include the children's evaluations
INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLANS	Following individual assessments you may should have an individual plan for each child. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Know their interests Know their strengths Identify areas of learning for encouragement & support. Create targets Identify dates for review Get input from Parents
FIELD TRIPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find a few local points of interest. If possible take time exploring your community.
MAKE LISTS	Create <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To Do lists Materials Needed Book lists This will ensure that the supplies needed are available when you need them.
KEEP PERSPECTIVE AND ENJOY	😊

8.6 APPENDIX VI: Invitation to Participate

**Fiona Healy
52 Oakleigh
Navan
Co. Meath
086 8548371
fiona.healy5@mail.dcu.ie**

**RE: Invitation to participate in a study as part of a Dublin City University
Doctor of Education Programme.**

16th January 2013

Dear

My name is Fiona Healy and I am currently a candidate on a Doctoral programme with Dublin City University. As part of this programme I must conduct an original piece of academic research. My own area of expertise is education and development in the early years, children aged birth to six.

In recent years there has been greater focus on the processes within the early years sector with the development of ;

- ‘Siolta’ - the quality framework
- ‘Aistear’ - the curriculum framework
- ‘Regulation 5 Health, Welfare and development of a child’ - the Child Care (Pre-School Services) No.2 2006
- Early Childhood & Education Scheme (The free pre-school year)

Providers who offer early years services have received different levels of support with these developments. I have chosen to review adult: child interactions using the Aistear framework as my guide. Aistear recognises that children learn and develop through interactions.

It is for this reason I propose to work with a number of early year’s services to identify current levels of quality and practice using rating scales. Based on the findings from the individual services I will design a training programme in partnership with the service. This programme will be based on the themes of Aistear and the good practice guidelines on interactions. In partnership with the participating service the training will be evaluated. After a six month period I will return to the services to complete the rating for a second time to see if there was any change due to the training. To ensure the research is valid I will need some services to be part of a control group, this means some of the services participating will not receive

training support. I will then do a comparison on the findings from the research and the evaluation. If the findings are positive, the training will be offered to all.

There are three main phases to my research

Phase one is the initial data collection. **This will be provided to all services who agree to participate.**

This will involve a complete analysis of the service including documentation, staff profiling and focus groups to discover the teams values attitudes and dispositions. The rating scales will be completed in this first phase one looking at overall quality and one looking at interactions. Feedback on results will be provided to the services in phase one.

Phase two is the training information workshops. **This is not available to the control services.**

Based on the findings from phase one a training programme will be devised for each service and their team.. This will include further staff analysis and evaluation.

Phase three follow up (six months later approx.) **This will be provided to all services who agree to participate**

Repeat the actions of phase one

I am currently seeking services to participate on this pilot research. If you are interested wish to participate please read the enclosed plain language statement. If you are in agreement with the terms outlined, please sign the managers copy of the consent form.

As the research cannot happen without the agreement of your team members, you need to give them a copy of the plain language statement and if they agree to participate please ask them to sign the childcare professional consent form.

If you or any of your team requires further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely
Fiona Healy BSc MA

MANAGERS COPY

I _____ (managers name)

on behalf of _____ (services name)

agree to participate in this doctoral study.

I have read the cover letter and understand the parameters of the research.

I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and I can withdraw at any time. I will inform my team members that their participation is also voluntary and they too can withdraw at any time.

I understand that parents should be informed that _____ (service name) are participating on the study. It should be clearly noted that **no child** will be identified or assessed as part of this study.

I understand that all information gathered will be treated a confidential and no person or persons will be identified within the final document.

Under Child Protection legislation I recognise that the researcher has a duty to care and any misconduct or abuse, as identified under the Child Protection guidelines, of a child will be reported under the child protection policy of our service.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

CHILDCARE PROFESSIONALS COPY

I _____ (employees
name)

of _____ (services name)

agree to fully participate in this doctoral study. I am 18 years or over ☐

I have read the cover letter and understand the parameters of the research.

I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and I can withdraw at any time.

I understand that as part of this process the researcher will have access to personnel files which contain confidential information regard me and my professional status.

I understand that I will be requested to participate in surveys and focus groups with my fellow team members.

I understand that as part of the research my work practices will be observed and assessed.

I understand that all information gathered will be treated a confidential and no person or persons will be identified within the final document.

Under Child Protection legislation I recognise that the researcher has a duty to care and any misconduct or abuse, as identified under the Child Protection guidelines, of a child will be reported under the child protection policy of our service.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

8.7 APPENDIX VII: Sample ECERS Page

Inadequate 1	2	Minimal 3	4	Good 5	6	Excellent 7
5. Space for privacy*						
1.1 Children not allowed to play alone or with a friend, protected from intrusion by other children.		3.1 Children are allowed to find or create space for privacy (Ex. behind furniture or room dividers, in outdoor play equipment, in a quiet corner of the room).		5.1 Space set aside for one or two children to play, protected from intrusion by others (Ex. no-interruption rule; small space protected by shelves). *		7.1 More than one space available for privacy.
		3.2 Space for privacy can be easily supervised by staff. *		5.2 Space for privacy accessible for use for a substantial portion of the day. *		7.2 Staff set up activities for one or two children to use in private space, away from general group activities (Ex. two pegboards at a small table in a quiet corner; computer for one or two children to use). *
<p>*Notes for Clarification</p> <p>Item 5. The intent of space for privacy is to give children relief from the pressures of group life. Isolation from the group as a punishment is not given credit under this item. A place where one or two children can play protected from intrusion by other children, yet be supervised by staff, is considered space for privacy. Private space can be created by using physical barriers such as book shelves; by enforcing the rule that children may not interrupt one another; by limiting the number of children working at a table placed in an out-of-traffic area. Examples of space for privacy are a small loft area; activity centers where use is limited to one or two children; a large cardboard box with cut-out windows, door, and a cushion inside; a small outdoor play house. (For a definition of space for privacy see <i>All About the ECERS-R</i>, pp. 35, 39, 40.)</p> <p>3.2. All spaces used for privacy must be easily supervised by staff.</p> <p>5.1. Staff must enforce the protection rule, if needed, in order to be given credit for this indicator.</p> <p>5.2. This indicator applies only to the space "set aside" for privacy in 5.1. If credit is not given for 5.1, then credit cannot be given for 5.2.</p> <p>7.2. "Staff" here refers to the regular teaching staff in the room. Specialists who come into the room specifically to work with one or two children do not count for this indicator. See "Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale" on p. 7 for definition of staff.</p> <p>Question</p> <p>7.2. Do you ever set up activities for just one or two children, away from the activities for the rest of the children? If so, please give examples.</p>						

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8.8 APPENDIX VIII – Sample Focus Group Responses

Question 1 – Do you like what you do?

"I do, honestly I do. I enjoy coming in to work every day and seeing the kids and doing things like art and everything I love all that". (CBR05P38)

" I love eh doing the job as well like X it's great to see it. Great to see the kids move from one stage to the other. I... I do have a little part in that which is nice but I do find I don't go home, I don't. y'know it is not that I'm not proud of it it's just I don't talk about it with my friends. There is one friend in particular and if I start talking she gets this glazed look obviously doesn't care like but em she has a child so she should" (*Laughs*) (CBR02P05)

CD: ALL: (nodding) "Yes, I love my job",

“While I enjoy working with children and the other staff I would love if the pay and hours were better” (CDR04P31)

Question 2 - What are the main tasks are in the service

“look after the children, engage in meaningful ways, different activities every week, different themes” CCR01P11.

“Yea and then the cleaning and there is a lot to do but I suppose that makes the day go quicker. In that you are constantly on the go you are never really able to sit down. Y’know” CBR02P05

“preparation for the day in the morning, making sure the equipment is in the right place”, CDR03P30.

Question 3 - How do you implement them?

“it is through play, yea that’s how I feel that is how it should be”.

(CBM06P39)

One professional put it

“ yea you just get on with and do what we have to do make’n sure we implement our Montessori curriculum, ...” (CDM04P27)

Question 4 - What do you think about education in the early years education?

“...we are seen more as care and support for the working parents, even though we are a Montessori school” (CDR02P29)

it was like I had a mam coming in and she was telling me the child was coming in and telling her about the continents, ‘it was great I didn’t even know them (CBR02P05)

Question 5 - Does every room have their own curriculum plan?

The response to the question was unanimous, all participants agreed that every room has their own curriculum plan.

Question 6 - How are the plans designed?

well me and X have the same as we are Montessori and we share some of the resources we need... (CDR03P30)

It’s the time of year as well go on Mother’s Day, Valentine’s day and they you have your seasons as well (CBR03P07)

Everyone is involved in all the planning, discussing, involving the children, age appropriate, interests say where the children are. (CCR01P11)

Question 7 - Do you have meetings, what does this involve?

Planning not so much at the staff meetings you find a couple a times a year where the girls can group work. There is just not the time to do that, have to do it during their work time and get cover which you would be doing most days anyway getting cover or maybe during holiday period, when schools are

off. You might get those times to come together so everyone, I think we had that last year in august, (CCM03P09)

Question 8 - Do you have enough information to input meaningfully?

We've gotten better at it since September (CBM06P39).

Question 9 - How is the children's work recorded/documented?

in my room each child has their own notebook where I write down what equipment they are using at the back but at the front we do the numbers and letters that we do. We often try to assess each child at least monthly however it does not always happen depending on time and attendance of the child. Who assess using narrative and checklists following the Montessori method. (CDR02P29)

Question 10 - How do you share the information with parents?

Through the daily copy and we have a key worker system, staff memo display on the wall, display, talk to the parents. Planning sheets on the door in the room. (CCR04P26)

Question 11 - What is your opinion on the Aistear Themes? / Are you able to cover all you need to cover under the themes?

Fairly hard pressed to find an activity that is not going to link into it.

Yea

I think if you found something it would not be safe for children to do. Yea, if it's not under Aistear as it covers everything. (CBM02P04)

Question 12- Do you find it easy enough to include the Aistear Themes

During the discussion questions 11 and 12 got put together as the participants moved on discussion the challenges.

Question 13- How do you link these to Síolta

rarely link them (CDR04P35).

I know we do Síolta I did covered it in college and stuff.. It's the 12 principles and getting the parents involved That was on thing I picked out was getting parents involved that's through Aistear as well a lot of it links to Aistear, (CBR02P05)

Yea that is why I always thought that they were going to merge together its very odd having the two when they should be together (CBR05P38)

Question 14 - Again how do you share this with your parents

Two of the service indicated that they share the information in the same way as before through notice boards, pictures and documentation.

Question 15 - How do you communicate with the children?

All teams responded in the same way through positive interactions. Chatting, eye contact, getting down to their level.

Question 16 - Do you think about the messages you are sending to the children on a daily basis?

Yea sometimes you don't think about it so much and then sometimes that they have over heard at home and your thinking where did they hear that and then you are thinking how much they take in and then it's the same here with us. Everything we do we say They are copying you're mindful of it but times a bit further back in your mind and then you hear something. (CBR02P04)

Question 17 - How would you describe the interactions with children in this service – Positive/ Negative How is this accomplished?

Very positive and warm, I try to listen to them always and give them the attention they need. It can be hard when things are quite busy or if we are on a tight schedule however I always try to be as friendly and open as possible by listening to them, letting them take the time they need to complete tasks, promoting their independence, answering questions they have etc. (CDR04P31)

Question 18 - How are changes decided on?

Question 19 - Who can implement them?

Question 20 - What do you do if you see practice you don't agree with?

I suppose I don't have Montessori and I started in Montessori in September and I have found it difficult, em I suppose I found it difficult because I don't have any Montessori training at all and training, coming from the baby room nice and calm and here is like woohooo" (CBR02P05)

"One different piece of equipment has seven lessons, so that hard you know... (CBR05P38)

...I don't actually like the Montessori equipment... (CBR02P05)

8.9 APPENDIX IX – Sample Lesson Plan

LESSON PLAN – INTERVENTION EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

The workshops devised for the interventions were based on the findings from the baseline data.

The average score received for Equality and Diversity was _____

The workshop was designed from materials available to early years providers.

LESSON PLAN-

PRESENTER	Fiona Healy
DATE	Session One Session Two
WORKSHOP TITLE	Equality & Diversity
CLASS TOPIC	Communication with young children
DURATION	One Hour 30 minutes approximately
NUMBER OF STUDENTS	Session One – Six Session Two - Four
STUDENT PROFILE	The participants all have a minimum Level 5 qualification in Early Years. There is a mix in the age range of the children whom they care for. There is a range of experience from two years to ten years.
AIMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● To introduce awareness of equality and diversity in the early years setting● To provide practical examples of how to include equality and diversity in an everyday curriculum.
LEARNING OBJECTIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● To identify appropriate methods of communication with young children.● To identify own weakness in communication● To develop self-awareness when communicating with children.
TEACHING METHODS	Presentation Role Play Feedback Discussion
RESOURCES NEED	Over head projector Role play handouts Observation Sheets Name Tags
Tutors Notes	
	Introduce session – Communication with children

	<p>Find out students experience - How many work directly with children, have children, nieces nephews etc?</p> <p>Ask the students to start thinking about how you communicate with them verbally and what you communicate non- verbally.</p> <p>This session –Role play Depending on size have two or more groups</p> <p>Minimum requirement 4 - 3 needed for role play and one observer.</p> <p>Explain each part</p>
Questions to stimulate discussion.	<p>a. Was this a familiar sight?</p> <p>b. Ask the person who played the child what their feelings were?</p> <p>c. What if anything have you learned from this?</p> <p>d. Why is it important</p> <p>e. How would you re-enact this with what you know now.</p>
Additional Learning	<p>1. Those who are more advanced can be asked to create their own template instead of using the tutors.</p> <p>2. Divide the students into groups for focused discussion, get one person to record to present back for general feedback.</p> <p>3. Pick a volunteer to type all the feedback for each class member.</p>
Reading /Resources	<p>Aistear/Síolta Practice Guide (Element 2, Principles including Rights of the Child and practitioner Image of the Child); 2015, NCCA, Dublin</p> <p>Diversity & Equality In Early Childhood - An Irish Perspective, Gill & Macmillan http://www.gillmacmillan.ie/AcuCustom/Sitename/DAM/056/Diversity_and_Equality_-_Look_Inside_Sample.pdf (accessed May 2015)</p> <p>Diversity and equality guidelines for childcare providers, National Childcare Strategy 2006 -2010, 2006, Office of the Minister for Children, Government Publications, Dublin</p> <p>1 Equal Choices Equal Chances, Human Rights Commission http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/private-and-public-sector-guidance/education-providers/primary-education-resources Accessed May 2015</p>

	<p>Just like a child Respect gender in the early years; A guide for childcare professionals, Zero Tolerance, 2013, Edinburgh</p> <p>Guidance for promoting equalities in early years and childcare, Suffolk County Council http://www.suffolklearning.co.uk/suffolklearning_images/users/Early_Years_Team_CYP//eycguidanceforpromotingequality.pdf Accessed May 2015q</p>
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8.10 APPENDIX X -Sample Observation

Space and Furnishings									
1. Indoor space								Comments:	
Y <input type="checkbox"/>				Yes <input type="checkbox"/>				Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	
	No <input type="checkbox"/>			No <input type="checkbox"/>	n/a <input type="checkbox"/>			No <input type="checkbox"/>	
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		3 <input type="checkbox"/>			5 <input type="checkbox"/>		7.1 <input type="checkbox"/>	
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		3 <input type="checkbox"/>			5 <input type="checkbox"/>		7.2 <input type="checkbox"/>	
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		3 <input type="checkbox"/>			5 <input type="checkbox"/>			
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		3 <input type="checkbox"/>						
			4 <input type="checkbox"/>						
								Score: 7	
2. Furniture for care, play, and learning								Comments:	
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>			Yes <input type="checkbox"/>			Yes <input type="checkbox"/>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	
	No <input type="checkbox"/>			No <input type="checkbox"/>	n/a <input type="checkbox"/>			No <input type="checkbox"/>	
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		3 <input type="checkbox"/>			5 <input type="checkbox"/>		7.1 <input type="checkbox"/>	
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		3 <input type="checkbox"/>			5 <input type="checkbox"/>		7.2 <input type="checkbox"/>	
			3 <input type="checkbox"/>			5 <input type="checkbox"/>			
								Score: 6	
3. Furnishings for relaxation								Comments:	
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>			Yes <input type="checkbox"/>			Yes <input type="checkbox"/>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	
	No <input type="checkbox"/>			No <input type="checkbox"/>				No <input type="checkbox"/>	
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		3 <input type="checkbox"/>			5 <input type="checkbox"/>		7.1 <input type="checkbox"/>	
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		3 <input type="checkbox"/>			5 <input type="checkbox"/>		7.2 <input type="checkbox"/>	
								Score: 2	
4. Room arrangement								Comments:	
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>			Yes <input type="checkbox"/>			Yes <input type="checkbox"/>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	
	No <input type="checkbox"/>			No <input type="checkbox"/>	n/a <input type="checkbox"/>			No <input type="checkbox"/>	
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		3 <input type="checkbox"/>			5 <input type="checkbox"/>		7.1 <input type="checkbox"/>	
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		3 <input type="checkbox"/>			5 <input type="checkbox"/>		7.2 <input type="checkbox"/>	
			3 <input type="checkbox"/>			5 <input type="checkbox"/>		7.3 <input type="checkbox"/>	

Score: 5

5. Space for privacy

Yes ☐ No ☒

No

1

Yes ☒ No ☐

Yes

3

3

Yes ☐ No ☒

Yes

5

5

Yes ☐ No ☒

Yes

7.1

7.2

Score: 3

Comments:

At no stage were the children provided with an opportunity to play by themselves.

6. Child-related display

Yes ☐ No ☒

Yes

1

1

Yes ☒ No ☐

Yes

3

3

Yes ☐ No ☒

Yes

5

5

5

Yes ☐ No ☒

Yes

7.1

7.2

Score: 4

Comments:

The Art on the walls was adult led Art that looked the same. Difficult for children to pick out their own work.

8.11 APPENDIX XI -Sample Feedback Centre B

Dear

Please find enclosed the result of the original baseline. I have included an analysis of the scores for the centre as a whole.

There are four areas for marks ranging from 1 to 7, you will see these on the feedback page.

While I score all the questions, the room received a mark where there was an omission stopping the environment receiving top marks. For example if the children had washed their hands before the meal/snack a 7 could have been achieved under health practices, instead they received 4 as the scoring had to stop as hand washing before meals is identified at this point.

It is these omissions I wish to focus on during the workshop sessions. There are also themes running through the service as a whole and I would like to choose the topics for the session based on these.

The first proposed workshop is on Communication and Language development, how we work with children who are learning and acquiring language (this will also assist where English is not the first language and it can also touch on promoting positive behaviour)

The second proposed workshop is on Activities and how to plan/schedule to include Aistear and Siolta in your curriculum. If you would like we can do a session on meaningful assessment to assist this). This workshop is a little be longer but will be broken into two.

The third workshop will look at the physical room/ the layout and what activities are accessible. What does the environment say to the child.

If you wish to discuss any of the scores please do not hesitate to contact me.

I wish to also take the opportunity to thank you for your participation and your patience with me during this research.

Kind regards

Fiona
086 8548371
pheonagh@gmail.com

8.11.1 Presentation of Results

	R2		R3		R4	Overall Score	Centre Average
Space and Furnishings	4.6		4.6		4.3	13.5	4.50
Personal Care Routines	6		4.8		5.4	16.2	5.40
Language and Reasoning	2.7		3.3		3.3	9.3	3.10
Activities	4.6		2.6		2.8	10	3.33
Interaction	5.5		3.8		3.8	13.1	4.37
Programme Structure	3.7		4.3		4.3	12.3	4.10
Parents and Staff	3.9		4.3		4.3	12.5	4.17

8.11.2 Meeting Report

Date of Meeting: 1st October 2014

Time of meeting: one hour approx.

Purpose: To provide feedback on the ITERS

In attendance: CBM02P04, CBR05P40 & FH

Discussion: The ITERS score.

Overall Average Rating: 4.8

Firstly we discussed the areas that had score over 5. Two of the seven areas scored over 5. There were very minor items that prevented the room from receiving a 7 in this area. As this is not a concern these are things while important we can revert back to.

Of the four areas scoring less than 5 it was agreed we would concentrate on the area of Space and Furnishings. While this was not the lowest scoring area the team felt that if they

‘fixed’ the environment some of the other areas would come naturally or at least make them easier to address.

There were some side discussion about work as a whole in the centre and if this is a recurring theme following the feedback they can be address in a general way.

Tasks Agreed:

Reflective Practice:

The team received a note book each to write down any ideas, questions, thoughts, observations etc that they have in relation to the study and the information we discuss.

Room Layout

Based on the score, some of the physical aspects of the room cannot be changed, however I have asked the team to consider ways around it, bearing in mind the Regulations and health and safety issues. I requested the team to take pictures of the empty room so we can look at it.

I have advised that I can do a workshop on Aistear & environment layout. They can attend this in a general way or I can do it with them as a team. Both parties are to go away and come up with some new layouts and look at areas of interest in the room.

8.12 APPENDIX XII - The Art Questionnaire

	Dail y	Weekly	Monthl y	Don't Know	Never
1. How often are Art activities carried out in the centre?					
2. How often are they carried out in the room you work in?					
3. How often do you carry out or lead the activity?					

4. Art in your childcare centre is mostly (please tick all the statements you feel are true)

A group activity –everyone does it at the same time	
An individual activity – children can choose when they want to do art	
Adult Led – the adult decides what the activity will be	
Child Led – The children decide	
The art is usually decided based on the season, Valentine’s Day, Christmas etc	

5. Do you feel there is sufficient equipment to carry out a variety of activities?

Yes ☐ No ☐

6. As an adult, what do you like/dislike about doing art with children

Like	Dislike

8.13 APPENDIX XIII – The Questionnaire

PERSONAL

Please fill out the following personal details

1. Gender Male Female
2. Date of Birth ----/----/----

If you are **a parent**, please answer the following question

3. How many children to you have?
4. What ages are they?

CURRENT EMPLOYMENT

5. Please give the name and address of the service you are employed in:

6. What date did you employment start

7. Please indicate if you are employed; Fulltime Part-time Seasonal

8. How many hours do you work on average per week _____

9. Please indicate your annual salary range

€10,000 -€15,000	€15,000-€20,000	€20,000- €25,000	€25,000 -€30,000
€30,000- €35,000	€35,000- €40,000	€40,000 -€45,000	€45,000 +

10. Please outline if there are there any other conditions of your employment?

POST PRIMARY EDUCATION QUALIFICATION

11. Please indicate which post primary qualifications you have (*please tick all that apply*)

Junior Certificate Intermediate Certificate Group Certificate

Leaving Certificate

Please indicate the number of honour subjects where honours were achieved

If you have a different qualification at post primary level, please identify.

SECTION ONE ~ CHILDCARE QUALIFICATIONS (PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY)

I have the successfully completed the following qualifications (*please tick all that apply*)

.FETAC LEVEL 5 Year achieved

Institute attended: _____

FETAC LEVEL 6 Year achieved

Institute attended: _____

Early years education Degree Year achieved

Institute attended: _____

Diploma in Nursery Management Year achieved

Institute attended: _____

Other Childcare Qualification: Please indicate

The Title: _____

Year Achieved

Institute attended: _____

Awarding Body; _____

If the qualification is not FETAC/HETAC/ University or Irish has it been placed on the National Qualifications Framework; Yes No

If yes please indicate the level achieved on the framework.

Please indicate any workshops. Short training or childcare conferences you may have attended. (For example, First Aid, Manual Handling, Aistear, Síolta, Child Protection, Behaviour Management, Literacy, Numeracy, Arts and Crafts etc)

Title	Year	organiser /trainer/agency
<i>Sample:</i> First Aid	<i>Sample;</i> 2008	<i>Sample;</i> Order of Malta

If you do not have a childcare qualification but have qualifications in other disciplines please fill in this section indicate, the title, the level of the qualification, the year you graduated and the institute where you studied. Please include all formal qualifications. If you have qualifications in addition to your childcare ones please fill in this section also.

The Title: _____

Awarding Body; _____

National Qualifications Framework Level

Year Achieved

Institute attended: _____

SECTION ONE~ EXPERIENCE

How long are you working in Childcare (please indicate in years): _____

Please indicate the number of years' experience you have with each of the age groups (please indicate no experience with a 0)

Babies 0- 1 year

Toddlers 1year – 2 years

Pre-school 2 years – 3 years

ECCE 3year – 5 years

Please indicate years of experience in the following services

Full Day Care

Sessional

Childminding

Have you experience in other areas, if yes please indicate your job title, where you worked, how long you worked for and your main duties (please include all work experience)

Job Title: _____

Place of work: _____

Number of years worked there

Main Duties: _____

SECTION TWO ~ PRACTICE

What is your current title: _____

What age range do you work with

Babies 0- 1 year

Toddlers 1year – 2 years

Pre-school 2 years – 3 years

ECCE 3year – 5 years

How long have you been working with the service _____?

PLANNING

Do you plan the activities in your room?

Yes

No

If you answered no is there are reason for this?

The plans are designed by the centre manager.

The plans are designed by the room leader.

A prescribed curriculum is used so there is no need for planning.

Please identify the curriculum used _____

The basic equipment is provided and the children decide what to play with.

Other: _____

If you answered yes

How often do you plan? _____

Who is involved in the process? _____

How do you plan? _____

If not mentioned above do you use any documentation to plan? Yes No

If yes or previously not mentioned please indicate what documents you use and why.

Do you review the plan _____ if yes how often _____?

Do you stick to the plan Yes No

If no, why not? _____

Do you think planning is important? Yes No

Please state the reasons for your answer

Have you heard of Síolta and Aistear? *(please tick the framework/s you have heard of)*

Síolta Aistear

Please indicate by ticking the appropriate box if the statement is true

I own my own copy of the manual Síolta Aistear

There is a copy in the room Síolta Aistear

There is a copy in the centre Síolta Aistear

I have never gone through the manual Síolta Aistear

I have never seen the manual Síolta Aistear

I did not know there was a manual Síolta Aistear

I feel competent in the use of, Síolta Aistear

The standards discussed at team meetings Síolta

The themes are discussed at team meetings Aistear

I try to apply the frameworks to my practice. Síolta Aistear

Rate the Aistear guidelines in order of importance for your practice 1 to 4, *(please note you can give the same rating to more than one guideline)*

1 = essential, 2 =very important, 3= important, 4 = not important

Building Partnership between parents and practitioners

Learning and developing through interactions

Learning and developing through play

Supporting learning and development through assessment

Do you feel you achieve all you want to achieve in your practice?

Yes No

Please explain your answer, For example if the answer is no state the main challenges that prevent you from achieving the practice you would like to achieve. If you answered yes please state what it is you achieve in your practice.

~ PERSONAL

Did you always want to work in childcare?

Yes No

Why did you choose childcare as a career?

Do you have any long-term career goals?

Do you feel valued as a childcare professional by

Yourself

Your family

Your friends

Your employer

The parents of the children you care for

Society in general

What do you think about education in general?

Did you like school?

Do you think the teachers you had influence how you felt about a subject/school? (please explain your answer)

Do you think you influence the children in your care? (please 263explain your answer)

Overall how would you describe yourself? Include any values or dispositions you may have.

8.14 APPENDIX XIV – Questionnaire Cover

**Fiona Healy
52 Oakleigh
Navan
Co. Meath
086 8548371
fiona.healy5@mail.dcu.ie**

RE: *A review of the relationship between professional development and adult/child interactions in an early years education setting'*

March 2013

Dear ,

Thank you so much for agreeing to be a participant in my study.

I want to start by saying as someone who has worked with children I know how time consuming and exhausting the profession can be and therefore I know it's big ask and I will support you as best I can through the process.

As part of the profiling of the participants, this is to identify if there is any correlation between attributes, values, personal experiences etc and how you work with the children, I would be grateful if you could complete the enclosed questionnaire. In the envelope, there is a second envelope in order for you to return it to me in the confidence that no one else shall see your responses.

I need for you to answer all questions and if it is not relevant to you simply put in N/A. If for any reason you need to seek clarity or want to ask me something about the questions or any part of the research please do not hesitate to contact me.

A coding system is being used in the recording of data so no one service or individual will be identifiable within the study or within the appendixes required for my tutor and examiners. The only people who know what your code is, is you and me.

This code is on your questionnaire. This is your code and by which I will refer to you when recording the data. In the focus group I will get you to refer to yourself using your code. I may use your code to give examples within the study but permission will be sought from you first. All transcripts relating to your own code will be forwarded to you for comment and approval.

If you have any concerns or questions in relation to any of this please do not hesitate to contact me at the above address.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Healy BSc MA

8.15 Appendix XV – The Sunflower

