Child Care in Practice

ISSN: 1357-5279 (Print) 1476-489X (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/cccp20

Implementing Aistear – the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework Across Varied Settings: Experiences of Early Years Educators and Infant Primary School Teachers in the Irish Context

Adell Woods, Arlene Mannion & Sheila Garrity

To cite this article: Adell Woods, Arlene Mannion & Sheila Garrity (2022) Implementing Aistear – the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework Across Varied Settings: Experiences of Early Years Educators and Infant Primary School Teachers in the Irish Context, Child Care in Practice, 28:4, 671-690, DOI: 10.1080/13575279.2021.1920367

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/13575279.2021.1920367

© 2021 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

Published online: 17 Jun 2021.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 36161

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Citing articles: 9 View citing articles

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=cccp20

CHILD CARE IN PRACTICE
2022, VOL. 28, NO. 4, 671–690
https://doi.org/10.1080/13575279.2021.1920367

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

OPEN ACCESS Check for updates

Implementing Aistear – the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework Across Varied Settings: Experiences of Early Years Educators and Infant Primary School Teachers in the Irish Context*

Adell Woods[a], Arlene Mannion[b] and Sheila Garrity[a]

[a]Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development and the UNESCO Child & Family Research Centre, Institute for Lifecourse and Society, School of Political Science and Sociology; [b]School of Psychology, National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland

ABSTRACT

Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, was launched in Ireland in 2009. The framework is applicable in all settings where children in the 0-6-year range are present; this includes all early years settings and the first two years of primary schools, referred to as "infant classes" in the Irish context. This article shares the findings of a local research project which sought to explore the implementation of "Aistear", by Early Years Educators (EYEs) and Primary School Teachers (PSTs) in pre-schools and infant classes. This research, based on a qualitative case-study design, was primarily focused on those educators working with children who are between three and six years of age and was based in the North East region of Ireland. The study examined the implementation of Aistear and how educators adapted their existing curriculum and daily routine. Thirteen educators participated, including six EYEs and seven PSTs. The collected data was thematically analysed with the emerging story captured through five key themes: Emergent Curriculum, Social Development, Communication, Holistic Development, and Implementation of Aistear. Overall, the benefits for children's social interactions, language development and cognitive development through play in a child-led environment were discussed by participants. However, training, ratios and resources were a concern and a requirement for EYEs and PSTs. The recommendations from this study indicates that further research into the implementation of Aistear on a national scale would offer greater insight into the adaptation of the curriculum framework within pre-schools and infant classes in primary schools.

KEYWORDS

Early Years Educator; Primary School Teacher; Aistear; Curriculum Framework; Emergent Curriculum

CONTACT Arlene Mannion arlene.mannion@nuigalway.ie School of Psychology, National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland

*This research was conducted by the first author under the supervision of the second and third authors in partial fulfillment of the requirements for her B.A. degree in Early Childhood Studies and Practice at NUI, Galway.

© 2021 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

1. Introduction

1.1 Aistear

Aistear is the national Early Childhood Curriculum Framework for children aged birth to six years developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in Ireland (NCCA, 2009a). Aistear, the Irish word for journey, is implemented in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) settings such as crèches[1], pre-schools, in childminders[2], by families in the home and in infant classes in primary schools with children across Ireland. Aistear promotes learning through play in a child-led environment where children's learning and development are supported and nurtured by the adult (Kernan, 2007). The themes and aims of Aistear are given in Table 1.

The Irish Republic is in the early stages of developing its ECEC sector. The first policy discussion of ECEC in the Irish educational context can be found in the White Paper "Ready to Learn" (Department of Education and Science/DES, 1999). Hayes (2014) highlighted that the White Paper mainly focused on children aged three to six years and that a direct impact of the White Paper was the development of *Síolta*, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education (CECDE, 2006). Similarly, the Aistear framework was produced as a direct development from the White Paper, "Ready to Learn" (Hayes, 2014).

In 2010, the introduction of the ECCE Scheme or the "Universal Pre-School Year" (Department of Health and Children, 2010), provided state funded access to a preschool setting to children for the year before they attended primary school. The Early Years Strategy Report, "Right From The Start"[3] (DCYA, 2013) recommended that universal pre-school be extended to include children from the age of three years of age and that children should be able to avail of this service until they attend primary school. In 2016 a second "Universal Pre-School Year" providing extended access for children from their third birthday was initiated (Citizens Information, 2017). By participating in this programme, all pre-schools agree under contract with the DCYA to adhere to implementing the Aistear framework with the guidance and support of locally based County Childcare Committees and Early Years Specialists (DCYA, 2016). In an effort

Table 1. Themes and Aims of Aistear.

Theme	Aims
Well-being	Aim 1: Children will be strong psychological and socially. Aim 2: Children will be as healthy and fit as they can be. Aim 3: Children will be creative and spiritual. Aim 4: Children will have positive outlooks on learning and on life.
Identity and Belonging	Aim 1: Children will have strong self-identities and will feel respected and affirmed as unique individuals with their own life stories. Aim 2: Children will have a sense of group identity where links with their family and community are acknowledged and extended. 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 4: Children will see themselves as capable learners.
Communicating	Aim 1: Children will use non-verbal communication skills. Aim 2: Children will use language. Aim 3: Children will broaden their understanding of the world by making sense of experiences through language. Aim 4: Children will express themselves creatively and imaginatively
Exploring and Thinking	Aim 1: Children will learn about and make sense of the world around them. 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 explore ways to represent ideas, feelings, thoughts, objects, and actions through symbols. Aim 4: Children will have positive attitudes towards learning and develop dispositions like curiosity, playfulness, perseverance, confidence, resourcefulness, and risk-taking.

to offer more cohesion between both national early years frameworks, the Aistear Síolta Practice Guide (NCCA, 2016) was developed as an online resource, available for Early Years Educators (EYEs) and Primary School Teachers (PSTs) to guide them through the complimentary implementation of Aistear and Síolta.

1.2 *Learning through play*

Aistear (NCCA, 2009a) describes "play" as a powerful learning tool; children will learn when they are in an environment that has rich learning opportunities and resources, for example; child-led activities, open-ended materials, suitable equipment and toys. Children require time and support to explore during play, using their senses and their body in solitary play, parallel play or in cooperation with peers; children need to develop skills such as sharing and taking turns (NCCA, 2009b). Aistear (NCCA, 2009a) lists ten characteristics of play as active, enjoyable, meaningful, interactive, therapeutic, adventurous, symbolic, communicative and involvement. Kernan (2007) discussed how children require time and guidance when exploring the many different elements and types of play and set out the following characteristics of play; play should be active, spontaneous, meaningful, involved, risky, fun, voluntary, creative, imaginary and sociable. Bruce (2001) discussed how children make props and play imaginary games, sometimes with made up rules, evidencing higher order thinking when at play and children enjoy play with adults, providing opportunities for the adult to support the child and guide them in their play and development. The Aistear curriculum, suggests adults, including educators, parents, and the wider community are key to supporting children's learning and development.

Despite the evidence of play as a vehicle for early learning, Irish educational legislation, including the Education Act of 1998 (Ireland, 1998) and the Education (Welfare) Act of 2000 (Ireland, 2000) does not mention the need for children to play nor the benefits of play for children's ongoing development (NCO, 2004). The Department of Education (1995) refers to physical education classes as play and how it improves children's gross motor skills, in the form of jumping, running and dancing. However, this policy does not mention the social or cognitive developmental benefits of play to children within the setting's environment (NCO, 2004). More recent policy developments including the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2011–2020 (DES, 2011a) discuss the importance of play and Aistear. The strategy discusses the transition from pre-school to infant class and acknowledges that the age bracket of three to six years involves both settings. A "play-based curriculum" in pre-schools and infant classes is emphasised so children will enjoy learning and will do so in an environment that promotes children's social development, literacy and mathematical development, imagination and creativity all through play-based activities (Smith & Pellegrini, 2013). This gap in legislation is a key issue in Ireland and in international early years contexts. Despite the evidence for the importance of play as identified by the research literature, there is tension between the evidence base of the benefits of play described in the literature and legislation. Research is needed to determine the reasons for the discrepancies between the research literature and legislation.

The Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (DES, 2011) makes many references to Aistear and to children learning concepts of literacy and numeracy in a holistic way through partnership with parents and learning through play. It outlines the benefits in the

early years of a child's education where children can develop social skills, communication skills, language, vocabulary, and numeracy in a child-led environment. The strategy addresses class sizes and teacher to child ratio difference in pre-schools compared to primary school. A need to amend the Primary School Curriculum (PSC: NCCA, 1999) to reflect the needs for early years education of four to six-year-old children, better reflecting the ethos of Aistear is also encouraged in the Strategy (DES, 2011).

1.3 *Social interactions*

Aistear is based on the premise that children learn in various environments: the home, pre-school, primary school and within the community (French, 2007; NCCA, 2009a). French (2007) focuses on the many relationships and social interactions children have and how these relationships all aid the development of children's language development, communication skills and social interactions.

Gray and MacBlain (2015) discuss Vygotsky's "social constructivism" perspective that positions children developing and learning through social interactions with adults and other children. Through these interactions, children observe how others react and interact, make meaning of this for themselves; children interpret these observations and experiences to adapt their own behaviour accordingly (Gray & MacBlain, 2015; Wertsch, 1981). Vygotsky viewed imaginative and creative play as a means to develop social skills through interactions (Gray & MacBlain, 2015) with such interactions enhancing the development of children's spoken language abilities (Pound, 2008). Interactions with adults and peers provide guidance, support and introduce a new understanding of language to children. Pound (2008) highlights Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) where children develop new skills with the aid of an adult or another child. This supports the view that children's language and social skills can be developed through play within the social environments, such as those found in pre-schools and infant classes.

The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project began in 1997 and was a longitudinal study lasting until 2014 (Melhuish et al., 2015). The study responded to questions related to the quality of care children were receiving, what elements of care were being provided in services and whether children were just being prepared for formal education (Melhuish et al., 2015). This UK-based national study, the first of its kind across Europe, researched children's social and cognitive development with children aged three to seven (Melhuish et al., 2003). The study tracked particular child-characteristics, including those children who did not attend pre-school or any formal education until the age of 5, children from disadvantaged areas or those who had parents with no higher academic qualifications (Melhuish et al., 2003). In 2015, the study revisited the same children, concluding that children who attended higher quality pre-school were more advanced in literacy and numeracy development and more developed in social skills and behaviour; the benefits were evident as far as secondary school level of education, more so than that of children who did not attend pre-school from the age of 3 or earlier. At age sixteen, children's social development remained enhanced, particularly for those who attended a higher quality of pre-school (Melhuish et al., 2015). The project concluded that children demonstrated an eagerness to learn and their pre-reading skills were higher than average when children attended early years setting from the age of three years (Melhuish et al., 2015). Previous research studies have also

demonstrated the importance and impact of preschool education (Doyle et al., 2011; Garrity et al., 2017)

1.4 *Implementing aistear*

At the time of this study, no national strategy was in place to ensure Aistear was implemented in early education settings. Several localised and targeted projects exist that aimed to better equip educators to understand and work with the framework. The Ballyfermot Early Years Language and Learning Initiative Programme was one such project, developed to promote quality improvements with children aged three to six years through the implementation of Aistear in pre-school and infant class settings (Doherty et al., 2013). The programme examined and documented the impact of a cross-sector approach to Aistear training offered to both EYEs and PSTs (Doherty et al., 2013). The research concluded shared learning across professional groups, with good rapport and mutual respect identified. PSTs had a clear insight as to how learning and development occurred in pre-schools through the implementation of Aistear. EYEs were able to ensure that children were better prepared for the transition to primary school and the relationship between pre-school and primary schools was evident and supportive. The children and families in the area benefited from this new connection and relationship between the pre-schools and primary school.

The adaption of Aistear into primary school settings appears to be slow in coming with scarce examples in the literature of such action; however, Ryan and Ní Fhoghlú (2012) discusses how the curriculum framework was adapted into the infant class setting. The outcome of the initiative included the school being commended for the high standard of cognitive, literacy and numeracy development through Aistear. The involvement of parents added to the success, with the research documenting the positive comments of parents with regards to engaging in playtime and the impact it had on the infant classroom (Ryan & Ní Fhoghlú, 2012). Reflecting the guidance from this guide, Ryan and Ní Fhoghlú (2012) recommended implementing Aistear by documenting children's interests through photos, video clips and noting comments on labels to allow PSTs to plan for future learning through Aistear.

Another locally developed project focusing on Aistear was the "Aistear in Action Initiative" (Daly, 2013), developed by Early Childhood Ireland and the NCCA in South Tipperary and North Cork regions of Ireland, providing mentoring and workshops to EYEs in seven pre-schools. The participants reported developing many new skills, embraced implementing the emergent curriculum and evidently changed the way the services planned their curriculum. However, at the time of this study, mentoring and in-service training was not nationally available to all settings for EYEs and PSTs. There is a lack of training programmes that PSTs can participate in apart from summer courses and workshops that provide information on implementing Aistear within the infant classroom, although it is foreseen that Aistear will be developed within the forthcoming revised primary curriculum (Daly, 2013).

In the two decades since the launch of "Ready to Learn" (DES, 1999) ECEC has risen as a priority area within education policy in Ireland. The development of the curriculum framework, Aistear, designed to be relevant to all educational settings for children up to six years of age, offers a bridge between ECEC and primary school contexts. Aistear

privileges learning through play, social interactions and relationships as the means through which children's early learning and development will be enhanced, reflecting the importance of these areas as revealed through this exploration of the literature. Despite localised training and research projects highlighting effective methods used by EYEs and PSTs for implementing Aistear, a national strategy offering training and resources for EYEs and/or PSTs in adapting the Aistear curriculum framework into pre-schools and primary school remains elusive though crucially needed.

1.5 *Aim of the current study*

The current study set out to explore the implementation of Aistear with EYEs and PSTs in pre-schools and primary schools in the Northeast area of Ireland. The key objective of the research was to explore the views of EYEs and PSTs on implementing the Aistear framework in pre-schools and infant classrooms. The research endeavoured to explore and examine the lived experiences of those implementing Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework; the challenges and dilemmas, the benefits, and the impact of all of these on children's early learning experiences, from the educators' perspectives.

2. Methodology

2.1 *Design*

This research adapted an inductive qualitative research design; a "bottom up" approach where data to be collected had no significantly clear right or wrong answer (MacNaughton and Hughes, 2008). As this research was on one focused subject, the implementation of Aistear in Irish educational settings, the qualitative research design for this project reflected a case study approach, and more specifically, an "intrinsic case study" (Mukherji & Albon, 2015, p. 105).

2.1.1 Sampling and data collection methods

A purposive sampling method was most suited as this is a common sampling strategy when gathering data with pre-selected criteria (Roberts-Holmes, 2014). This study focused on one topic: the implementation of Aistear and focused on one cohort of educators: those working with three to six-year-old children. The study needed to gather information from EYEs and PSTs who have recent experience working with the curriculum framework with this age cohort of children.

Based on the local knowledge of the lead researcher, two large primary schools with several junior and senior infant classes were identified, as was a large early years setting, with several preschool age groupings within the service. The researcher initially approached the principal of the schools and the manager of each early years service and sought permission to carry out the research with EYEs and PSTs in these settings. Following this, information sheets were shared with the target participants, resulting in six EYEs and seven PSTs, all of whom were female and working with the identified age cohort of children, agreed to partake. Of the PSTs, five taught junior infants and two taught senior infants. Participant consent forms were also provided at the time of interview, to ensure the research met the ethical guidelines of the sponsoring university.

Data collection, in the form of semi-structured interviews took place over a period of five weeks. All interviews took place within the educational setting in which the participant worked; this allowed for the environment to support the conversation, extend the responses through prompting by the researcher, and offered evidence of how the physical setting was considered to underpin and extend engagement with Aistear by each participant. An interview guide of eleven open-ended questions was developed based on the initial review of literature. These questions are included in Appendix 1. General questions are recommended to allow the participants to create their own meaning of the question asked with Creswell stating "the more open-ended the questioning the better, as the researcher listens carefully to what people say or do in their life setting" (2003, p. 8).

As recommended by Mukherji and Albon (2015) a pilot interview was conducted with a colleague of the first author and the outcome from the interviewee was that the questions were complex and needed some thought. The interviewee felt that they did not give adequate answers that fully explained how Aistear is implemented within the ECCE preschool. The researchers concluded that if the participant had seen the questions and had time to fill in the main points of information for each question that when the interview took place the participant would not leave any vital information out and that the research would be relevant and informative. The benefit of pilot interviews was evident in this project. During early interviews, held with three PSTs, it emerged that the format of the questions and the order in which they were being asked was possibly more focused to EYEs, reflecting the researcher's own professional background. The phrasing of the questions often required the researcher to re-state or re-phrase questions or change the format in order to gain the information required from participants. Reflection on these experiences led to a review and adjustment of the phrasing, format and ordering of the questions as recommended by Mukherji and Albon (2015) following the use of pilot interviews. The data from the three early interviews were included in the current analysis.

2.3 *Analysis*

Audio-recorded interviews were later transcribed verbatim (Lacey & Luff, 2001). This approach allowed the interviewer to listen actively and participate in free flow conversation, ensured the context of the conversations were maintained and produced a "thorough and reflective analysis" (Roberts-Holmes, 2014, p. 147) of the phenomenon under examination. All data was coded by a single coder. A multi-staged thematic approach to analysis was taken (Braun & Clarke, 2006), facilitated the coding of data, leading to the emergence of sub-themes in the data that were clearly identified in the case study (Lacey & Luff, 2001).

2.4 *Ethical issues*

The lead researcher provided each participant with an information sheet outlining the nature of the research and stating their role and expectations about their involvement in the project. Participants were assured that all data collected remained confidential with pseudonyms adapted to protect anonymity. Each participant was asked to sign a consent form to acknowledge that participating in this case study was voluntary and that they understood how the data would be used. The consent form endeavoured to

ensure each participant's rights and dignity was protected throughout the study. The participant information sheet also highlighted a helpline number for any participant who may have found the interview distressing in any way.

3. Findings

The process of thematic data analysis resulted in five key themes and a number of sub-themes, given in Table 2.

3.1 *Emergent Curriculum*

Frequent themes that were identified were children's interests or children's emergent interests, child-led, teacher-led and assessments; these were merged under the overarching theme of Emergent Curriculum.

'*Extending learning and children's emerging interests.*' (Patricia, EYE)

'*We implement emerging interests.*' (Sarah, PST)

Child-led

The child-led curriculum with regards to Aistear was frequently mentioned, particularly among EYEs, as the following extract highlights:

'*Aistear impacts my everyday practice as what we do in the setting each day is child-led. My role is to help the children extend their already emerging interests and make sure they are confident enough to show and tell us their emerging interests.*' (Naoise, EYE)

Another also discussed child-led curriculum in her pre-school stating:

'*Child-led interests are more meaningful, more fun, children engage in activities more, like we went on an autumn walk to look for leaves to make our autumn tree, we came across an apple tree and our whole learning changed, our tree is now an apple tree, we made apple prints with the apples, we discussed the colours of the apples, we made apple tart, we were guide by the children's interest.*' (Mary, EYE)

The following PST referred to a child-led curriculum during "Aistear time" (Kate, PST):

'*It involves the children's choices and decisions which makes them feel more active in their learning.*' (Emily, PST)

'*We observe children at play and recognise their interests and abilities; these are then built upon using the Aistear framework.*' (Kate, PST)

Table 2. Five key Themes and Sub-Themes.

Name of Theme	Sub-themes
1. Emergent Curriculum	1. Child-led 2. Teacher-led 3. Assessment
2. Social Development	1 Roleplay/Socio-dramatic Play 2. Scaffolding
3. Communication	1. Pedagogy of Listening 2. Language
4. Holistic Development	1. Community 2. Partnership with Parents
5. Implementation of Aistear	1. Training 2. Resources

Teacher-led

In contrast to the EYEs, PSTs appear to adopt a more structured approach to Aistear in their classrooms, as the following data highlights:

> '*I have five groups in my class and each week I plan five different activities. The groups then rotate around each activity each day so at the end of the week each child has experienced each activity; a plan rota is on display, so each child knows where they will be playing that day.*' (Kate, PST).

> '*My role is to facilitate organisation of groups and to support the enhancement of their Aistear experience.*' (Emma, PST).

> '*We have a rota system so that the children will know what activity they go to on specific days.*' (Sarah, PST).

Assessment

Many of the EYEs discussed how children's emerging interests were documented, how this informed the planning of the room and their approach to extend children's learning.

> '*We use Aistear assessments for the children once a week … like we might see something the child is interested in and then we will think of a way it can be extended on and then link it back to Aistear's themes, aims and goals, it might be a … .at circle time a child might tell us something they seen at the weekend or a new book about let's say Dinosaurs, we would then make sure our Dinosaurs are taken out at free play and possibly brought into the sand and water area or creative area.*' (Naoise, EYE)

Mary and Naoise stated how in their pre-school they document emerging interests:

> '*We make notes on pads every day and place them on a notice board under the child's picture, at the end of the day we can see how our planner will look tomorrow or themes and interests can lead to future learning areas.*' (Mary, EYE)

> '*Documenting learning and development with notes, photographs, the children's work, paintings, crafts and then the Aistear assessment let us reflect on our weekly and daily plans, sometimes we re-organise the room, change activities and plan for extended learning.*' (Naoise, EYE)

A number of participants expressed different experiences on assessment through Aistear in the classroom environment:

> '*We don't really use it for assessment, more through photos; you can notice goals being met but not necessarily using Aistear as a guide for development or milestones.*' (Vicky, EYE)

> '*We use primary school curriculum assessments, not Aistear.*' (Kate, PST)

3.2 *Social development*

A recurring topic was the social development of children and the role of the Aistear framework in supporting that development:

> '*It helps to develop language, their social interactions skills and allow them to learn informally in a stress-free way and it promotes interaction with peers and adults throughout the school.*' (Maisie, PST)

'*It develops children's connections and relationships with other children in the classroom.*' (Amanda, PST)

Role-play/Socio-Dramatic play

Kate, a PST expressed how she extends children's social interactions:

'*I also think that Aistear brings content, I am teaching outside life through play … so instead of just discussing something the children can engage in hands-on active learning and experience the process for themselves, so for example we had one child tell us about his visit to the dentist so in the role-play area we had a dentists and we each had a turn to sit in the dentist's examination chair as we counted our teeth.*' (Kate, PST)

'*I tend to get involved (laugh), as it's also a time when children develop social skills such as sharing and problem solving.*' (Amanda, PST)

'*Socio-dramatic play develops their connections with others role play proves excellent in helping the children work out how to read certain situations and how to respond.*' (Sarah, PST)

Scaffolding

Reflecting a socio-cultural understanding of learning through interactions, the majority of participants discussed Bruner's concept of "scaffolding" or "supporting" children, describing the role of the adult in supporting children's learning and development.

'*As a teacher, I believe my role is to scaffold the children's learning and their connections during Aistear. Sometimes some children need a little start, a stimulus, or incentive to spark conversation of teamwork on a building activity. I often find that joining in at role-play station can be an excellent way of encouraging to talk and work together so I might be an impatient customer in the shop, it gets them thinking and working together to resolve the problem.*' (Kate, PST)

'*We support and guide children in their play and interests.*' (Patricia, EYE)

3.3 *Communication*

The majority of participants expressed how children's communication skills, language development and vocabulary were enhanced "during free play." (Emma, EYE)

'*It encourages communication and in turn this enriches vocabulary and an enriched vocabulary will underpin all aspects of the primary curriculum.*' (Fiona, PST)

'*If children are finding it hard to mix or communicate then small group time can help their interactions.*' (Maisie, PST)

Pedagogy of Listening

Many participants discussed listening to children during play:

'*At circle time, we take notes of what the children talk about and tell us to build a basis for learning for each child.*' (Naoise, EYE)

'*Through their interests and that everyone gets involved and everyone is heard, we chat with one another, lunch time is a good time to chat and listen to their conversations.*' (Vicky, EYE)

'*Children get the chance to listen and respond to each other.*' (Sarah, PST)

Language

Through interactions, a number of participants highlighted the importance of the Aistear approach for promoting language and vocabulary, as is promoted in the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2011–2020 (DES, 2011b):

'*I find that Aistear is very beneficial in developing children's oral language, self-confidence and self-esteem.*' (Sarah, PST)

'*Aistear provides me with the opportunity to have one to one conversations with children during play.*' (Kate, PST)

'*Promotes positive communication skills.*' (Patricia, EYE)

3.4 Holistic Development

Discussions related to social development and the enhancement of language occurred during the research interviews. Participants also discussed overall development of young children, or their "holistic development".

'*Most activities are based around the child's senses which helps in their holistic development.*' (Sophie, EYE)

'*Learning goals can be explored through all areas of development allowing the children to develop holistically.*' (Patricia, EYE)

'*Social Personal and Health Ed. and religion along with Aistear and circle time help the holistic development in our setting.*' (Maisie, PST)

Community

Linked to a child's holistic development is their sense of self, and their formation of identity (NCCA, 2009) which is underpinned by their feelings of belonging within the local community. When examining how pre-schools and primary schools adapt the curriculum to engage the local community, the majority of participants shared similar responses:

'*I think it's a whole child perspective to learning teaching and engaging community, children's growth and development potential is raised, it's a holistic approach.*' (Sophie, EYE)

'*We choose specific themes and link them to our curriculum that highlights similarities and differences that exist in our communities which builds respect for all.*' (Eve, PST)

The majority of EYEs discussed inviting members of the community into the settings:

'*We invite community helpers such as the lollipop lady, Garda [police], the ambulance service to make connections with community.*' (Emily, EYE).

Partnership with parents

Both cohorts of educators discussed the involvement of parents in their programmes. A number of PSTs highlighted how parents are involved in the primary school setting:

'*We record children's work and keep parents informed and involved in certain activities.*' (Sarah, PST)

The majority of EYEs in pre-schools discussed direct involvement of parents in the setting:

'*We invite our parents into the setting to tell the children about their occupations or hobbies, we've had guards, midwives, coastguards, farmers into visit us.*' (Mary, EYE)

'*We have daily conversations with our parents; one parent mentioned they were trying to teach their child about road safety when crossing the road, so one of our themes became road safety.*' (Vicky, EYE)

3.5 *Implementation of Aistear*

The main focus of this study was to explore and examine how EYEs and PSTs implement the Aistear curriculum framework, in their varied educational settings. It was not surprising then that this topic emerged as a key theme. Kate, a PST, explains how Aistear is implemented in the infant classroom.

'*Aistear is taught from 1 to 1.45 daily but really again we prepare the room and children get aprons on for water area and junk art materials are taken out and I also find I need to check with every child that they know what area they are supposed to be at and they know what they are supposed to be doing, play doesn't start until ten past one and then we need to tidy up at twenty five to two as we need ten minutes for assessment so I suppose it's really only twenty five minutes of Aistear a day.*' (Kate, PST)

All PSTs in infant classes offered similar examples of challenges they faced when implementing Aistear:

'*With an already overloaded primary school curriculum it can be difficult to fully get to grips with Aistear*' (Eve, PST)

'*Smaller pupil-teacher ratio would make Aistear more effective and would allow for more effective and engaging group work*' (Fiona, PST)

Whereas none of EYEs described a limited time frame for engaging with Aistear in their daily routines, they do, however, find the workload challenging, though ratios do not appear to be an issue:

'*It can be difficult to find the time to plan, document and review each child's individual interest every week, non-contact time to do it all is an issue*' (Patricia, EYE)

Training

The need for training to support educators understanding of and engagement with the framework emerged as a sub-theme from the data:

'*I do feel that because Aistear is intended to take such a central role in the infant teaching day, that more on the job training or in-service … .and learning support staff who work in the junior end.*' (Sarah, PST)

'*Integrate it more in the Primary curriculum.*' (Fiona, PST).

'*We've looked for help and advice, we attended some workshops, but they are very basic, I've got more help from networking at these workshops than from the actually information provided.*' (Mary, EYE).

Resources

The guidelines and resources developed by the NCCA to support involvement with Aistear were mentioned by the majority of participants, with the PSTs not as positively inclined towards working with these.

> '*You know to be honest, I have rarely used the Aistear guidelines as an assessment tool as I feel it doesn't provide me with enough information on implementing Aistear in the classroom.*' (Kate, PST)

However, a number of EYEs discussed their experience with resources more positively:

> '*I've looked at the new Aistear Síolta guide and it has some good ideas and reflective points that make sure you are implementing both the Aistear curriculum and Síolta the quality framework.*' (Patricia, EYE)

> '*I use the Aistear Toolkit from time to time.*' (Mary, EYE)

4. Discussion

The analysis of research data resulted in the development of key themes, offering an enhanced understanding of the implementation of Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework in pre-schools and infant classes in primary school within the Irish context. Drawing on the literature shared earlier, these emerging themes are discussed, with an aim of offering insight and greater understanding of the phenomena under investigation.

4.1 *Emergent Curriculum*

Through the interviews, all participants mentioned "emerging curriculum", "child-led" and "teacher-led activities". Narratives of a nature walk (EYEs) and a visit to the dentist (PST) were two examples shared of children's interests leading the activity planning. Pound (2008) highlighted children's learning should be meaningful in order for children to become engaged in their own learning. In a child-led environment children's interests and ideas are brought to life and children take control of their development, learning at their own pace (Pound, 2008). Aistear (NCCA, 2009a, p. 11) informs EYEs and PSTs that as children are recognised as competent learners, "play and hands-on-experiences" are much more important to children and learning outcomes are greater if children are given the opportunity to freely explore the world around them.

The majority of PSTs spoke of their role in the infant classroom, highlighting how "Aistear time" is time limited, highly structured and teacher-organised. Several PSTs discussed planning five activities and five groups of children and how each group rotates around each activity, guided by the teacher, with an end of week goal of each group experiencing each activity. The PSTs noted the "themes" that guide "Aistear time" are teacher-selected. The Primary School Curriculum (PSC) (NCCA, 1999) recommends the time allocation for each subject each week, for instance, physical education time allocated is one hour, whereas subjects such as English and Irish are allocated five and a half hours per week. It appears these educators were using a similar approach based on allocating time for Aistear and related group activities within each day. Published in 1999,

the PSC does not refer to Aistear; however, it does state that the age and stage of development of the children in the infant classes must be considered and the timetable can be more flexible (NCCA, 1999).

Currid and McDermott (2015) discussed the emergent curriculum and highlight the importance of observing and documenting children's play in order to plan for the children's future learning and development. The online Aistear Síolta practice guide (NCCA, 2016) provides many guidelines for assessing children's learning and development through the pillar "planning and assessment". Assessment tools are available online to enable EYEs and PSTs to critically reflect how children's interests are adapted into the daily, weekly and monthly routine in the setting (NCCA, 2016). The majority of EYEs referred to taking notes, using note pads, and taking photos to aid assessment. This group of educators discussed how daily activities and plans were based on children's emergent interests, rather than the adult selection. However, the majority of PSTs did not consider their daily "Aistear time" as an opportunity for assessment, referring only to the PSC as the route by which they assessed children's learning and development.

4.2 *Social Development*

All PSTs referred to socio-dramatic play when exploring children's social interactions and the benefits of role-play within the setting. Bruce (2001) discussed in her twelve stages of play, how children have the opportunity to resolve conflicts, to develop friendships, to work together or alone. Aistear describes this type of play as "hands-on experiences" (NCCA, 2009a, p. 11). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) highlights the children's right to play under Article 31.1. Reflecting socio-cultural theories, role-play allows children time to mimic other behaviours and roles they have seen in their society and it allows them time to interact with peers and adults. Gray and MacBlain (2015) outlined Piaget's preconceptual stage of development and the theory that children learn and develop through social interactions, through role-play and mimicking others.

The majority of participants discussed guiding, supporting, or scaffolding children's learning and development during the pre-school session or in "Aistear time" in infant classes. Understanding the concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) facilitates educators in supporting the child developing and learning new tasks (Pound, 2008). According to Vygotsky, children can learn and develop social skills and explore social situations through imaginative play (Gray & MacBlain, 2015). French (2007) identified that children can develop positive social interactions through play with support from peers and adults in the pre-school and primary school environment. The current study demonstrated the importance of social development in early childhood settings. Future research needs to demonstrate how social development has an impact in relation to practitioners, policy-makers and researchers.

4.3 *Communication*

A number of EYEs and PSTs expressed how children's communication skills were enhanced, in their view, due to the settings engagement with Aistear. Participants cited how children learned to take turns in conversation by listening to one another

and this engagement in conversation enabled children to become confident and competent learners and experiment using new vocabulary. EYEs and PSTs can engage in conversation, listen to opinions and implement children's interests into the setting, ensuring that children's voices are heard. This ensures that each child's sense of identity, belonging and well-being are nurtured within the early years and the infant class environment (NCCA, 2009a).

According to Hawkins (2014, p. 729) the "pedagogy of listening" ensures the environment is child-led and encourages a child's language and vocabulary development. The Aistear theme of *Communicating* suggests children develop skills such as listening, talking, reading cues and decoding behaviours in a quality environment and given the opportunity, children will discuss interests and events in their lives (NCCA, 2009a). Adults can support children's future development and learning through positive communication experiences.

4.4 *Holistic Development*

The findings revealed how EYEs and PSTs adapted the curriculum to meet children's holistic development. According to Aistear's principles of learning, children learn and develop in a rich environment and children's "cognitive, creative, emotional, linguistic, moral, physical, social and spiritual development" (NCCA, 2009a, p. 10) can be supported in early years settings and in primary schools with the support of EYEs and PSTs. EYEs discussed children learning through their senses and embracing the environment in which they are immersed. PSTs highlighted how the current curriculum and the Aistear framework support and enhance each child's holistic development through, for example, circle time and in supporting children's individual needs.

The PSC (NCCA, 1999) aims to meet children's holistic development and to support children's future learning into post primary education. The EPPE project in Europe (Melhuish et al., 2015) concluded that children who received a good foundation of early years education from three to seven years of age displayed higher social and cognitive skills into post-primary level education. The project also investigated the home learning environment of the children with children who attended pre-school displaying desirable social behaviours, attending school more and achieving higher results (Melhuish et al., 2015). This was especially evident in children from disadvantaged backgrounds or in families where parents had no formal qualifications. This indicates that a high-quality early years setting with a view of supporting children's holistic development will have a long-term impact on children's future learning and ongoing development.

Reflecting the tradition in ECEC of working in partnership with families, the majority of EYEs discussed inviting children's parents, family and members of the community into the pre-school setting to further enhance children's knowledge, curiosity and interests. Aistear (NCCA, 2009b) gives guidelines to EYEs and PSTs on the benefits of including parents in the setting; children's sense of identity and belonging should be enhanced, and it allows other children, EYEs and PSTs to gain an understanding of each child's background and family traditions. Parents can also contribute to the setting, participate in playtime, take part in annual outings and inform children of their occupation or hobbies. Ryan and Ní Fhoghlú (2012) highlighted how the participation of parents at "Aistear time" benefited the children and the primary school, enhancing relationships

between PSTs and parents and had a direct impact on the child. However, there were very little documented findings in the literature of PSTs engaging parents and the community in the primary school setting.

4.5 *Implementation of Aistear*

The objective of the current study was to explore the views of EYEs and PSTs on adapting the Aistear framework in a pre-school and infant class in primary school. The PSTs highlighted the constrained time frame in which Aistear was rolled out, while most EYEs reflected the approach shared by Naoise: "*Aistear impacts my everyday practice as what we do each day in the setting is child-led*". While the PSC (NCCA, 1999) allocates time for each subject, Aistear has not yet been introduced into the formal curriculum. PSTs suggested that the curriculum "*be integrated more*" (Fiona, PST). Although, the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (DES, 2011) highlighted the importance of incorporating play into the early years curriculum, it also acknowledges that the three to six years age bracket includes children attending pre-school for the "universal pre-school year" and children in infant classes in primary school.

Many PSTs also highlighted teacher-to-child ratio and indicated that lower in infant classes ratios could improve engagement with Aistear. The current Action Plan for Education 2016–2019 (DES, 2016) addresses the issue of large numbers in infant classes; Action 66 aims to reduce the size of infant classes. It also identifies the importance of early years education and indicates the need for the infant class curriculum to be re-developed in order to provide a better outcome for children's future engagement in education.

All participants in this study expressed the need for workshops and for in-service training to support their work with Aistear. Research by Doherty et al (2013) evidenced the value of joint Aistear training for EYEs and infant class PSTs. The initiative resulted in shared knowledge and enhanced professional relationship building between EYEs and PSTs. These findings indicated participants' perspectives that transitions from pre-school to primary school were improved for the children in the local community. Daly (2013) highlighted the "Aistear in Action Initiative", presently being rolled out in the Northeast area of Ireland as part of DES Action Plan, offers support, guidance, and in-service mentoring on using the online resource, Aistear Síolta Practice Guide (NCCA, 2016) in pre-schools. However, there were no such initiatives for PSTs. PSTs, as indicated by Daly (2013), receive training in the form of summer courses and workshops.

4.6 *Recommendations*

A number of recommendations were revealed from this research:

- Both cohorts of educators would welcome mentoring, in-service training and continuing professional development opportunities related to engagement and application of Aistear within their early educational settings.
- PST highlighted limited information and the need for a more integrated understanding of Aistear with the PSC.

- EYEs expressed an interest in networking opportunities in order to fully engage with Aistear curriculum framework.
- Future research on a larger-scale would have the potential to create a fuller picture of the implementation of Aistear in Irish pre-schools and primary schools. Research examining the time-based allocation of engaging with the framework, in comparison to the full-programme engagement with Aistear by EYEs during the universal pre-school time would be insightful.
- The approach by the two educator cohorts to Aistear, with EYEs seeing it as all encompassing, while PSTs viewing it as a separate aspect of their daily routine reflects, perhaps, different traditions and approaches to early education. Research into the underpinning theories, values and knowledge within these two educational traditions and the initial training of these two cohorts of educators could offer insight into these differences.

A gap in knowledge informed this study and these findings are making an initial contribution to this area. Recommendations arising from this study encourages the development of an increase of training and other support services in response to these findings.

4.7 *Limitations*

This was essentially a small case study with purposive data sampling used. However, it reflects the implementation of Aistear in the lived experiences of educators in pre-schools and primary schools in the Northeast of Ireland. A larger sample, covering a wider geographic area, may well give greater insight into this shifting focus within the Irish educational context. In addition, extending the analysis team to address possible shortcomings of a single analyst may address limitations in the study.

4.9 Conclusion

The main aim of this small-scale research project was to explore the implementation of Aistear with EYEs and PSTs in pre-schools and primary schools with children aged three to six years. The objective of the research was to explore the views of EYEs and PSTs on implementing Aistear Curriculum Framework in their settings. The research findings highlighted EYEs' and PSTs' views on the benefits to development through play based on the Aistear curriculum framework as it supports children's learning and empowers their confidence and self-esteem. The child-led approach, promoted by Aistear feeds children's curiosity and hunger for new knowledge, establishing future educational patterns. Findings of this study are supported by research conducted in the larger early childhood education field. Findings are consistent in relation to the implementation of play and the further need for training in the field. A recommended larger scale research study on this topic would possibly inform government policy, early years settings and primary curriculum on the implementation of Aistear within early years settings and infant classes in primary schools across Ireland. Aistear, the Irish word for journey, and as can be seen from the findings of this study, educators working with our youngest leaners are on a journey to engage with and implement Aistear in pre-schools and infant classes in primary schools across Ireland.

Notes

1. Full day care services
2. Home based childcare
3. Right From the Start was developed by an external Expert Advisory Group in 2013 as a commended strategy; however it has yet to be enacted by the DCYA.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Adell Woods has 20 years experience working with children in early years education. The Aistear Curriculum Framework has changed how early years educators provide education for children in Ireland. Having three young children of her own led to her curiosity and research of how an emergent curriculum in early years settings and primary schools was implemented. Adell have worked in a range of early years services in Ireland and Australia and have experience in a Junior Infant Montessori Primary School class. Adell now owns a Montessori School and After School for the last 14 years. Adell also currently work with DCU as a placement tutor and is studying for my Masters in Early Years Education.

Dr. Arlene Mannion is a Research Fellow in the Irish Centre for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Research (ICAN) at National University of Ireland Galway. Arlene holds a PhD and MSc in Applied Behaviour Analysis and a BA in Psychology. Her research interests include children and adolescents, autism spectrum disorder, and rare and related neurodevelopmental disorders.

Dr. Sheila Garrity is the Academic Director of Early Childhood programmes at the National University of Ireland Galway, a Senior Researcher at the UNESCO Child & Family Research Centre and Lecturer in Early Childhood Studies at the School of Political Science & Sociology.

References

Alam, A., Foley, M., O'Riordan, B., O'Riordan, M., & Daly M. (2013). The Aistear in action initiative. *Childlinks*, *2*, 9–11. https://shop.barnardos.ie/a/downloads/-/7fbef4ac87e1cda8/619426c051a17764

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101.

Bruce, T. (2001). *Learning through play–babies, toddlers and the foundation years*. Hodder & Stoughton.

CECDE/Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education. (2006). Síolta: The national quality framework for early childhood education. Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education.

Citizens Information. (2017). '*Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme*. Accessed March 15, 2017. http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre_school_education_and_childcare/early_childhood_care_and_education_scheme.html

Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed). Sage.

Currid, J., & McDermott, M. (2015). Síolta and supporting play. *Childlinks*, *2*, 7–11. https://shop.barnardos.ie/a/downloads/-/9504066a7e06a85c/9fec39ef1f9d6ec1

Department of Children and Youth Affairs. (2013). *Right from the start: Report on the expert advisory group on the early years strategy*. Stationary Office.

Department of Children and Youth Affairs. (2016). *Early Childhood Care and Education Grant Funding Agreement 2016-2017*. Accessed March 22, 2017. https://pip.pobal.ie/Shared%20Documents/ECCE%20Grant%20Funding%20Agreement%202016_17.pdf
Department of Education. (1995). *Time in schools: Circular 11/95*.
Department of Education and Science. (1999). *'Ready to learn' White Paper on Early Childhood education*. The Stationary Office.
Department of Education and Skilla (DES). (2011a). *Literacy and numeracy for life long learning: The national strategy to improve literacy and numeracy among children and young people 2011 to 2020*. Department of Education and Skills.
Department of Education and Skills (DES). (2011b). *Literacy and numeracy strategy 2011–2020*. Department of Education and Skills
Department of Education and Skills. (2016). *Action Plan for Education 2016-2019*. Accessed March 28, 2017. http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Corporate-Reports/Strategy-Statement/
Department of Health and Children (DHC). (2010). Office of the Minister for Children. Free Pre-school Year in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme. http://www.omc.gov.ie/viewdoc/asp?fn=2Fdocuments2FECCE-Scheme%2Fintro.htm&mn=chia&nlD=13
Doherty, A., McMillan, D., & Walsh, G. (2013). *Aistear in action: An evaluation of the ballyfermot early years language and learning initiative's programme to promote quality improvement in early years settings through the use of the aistear framework*. Joe O'Rourke.
Doyle, O., Logue, C., & McNamara, K. A. (2011). Readiness to implement a National Quality Framework: Evidence from Irish early Childhood Care and education centres. *Child Care in Practice*, *17*(2), 163–184. https://doi.org/10.1080/13575279.2010.546776
Garrity, S., Moran, L., McGregor, C., & Devaney, C. (2017). An informed Pedagogy of community care, and respect for diversity: Evidence from a qualitative evaluation of early years services in the west of Ireland. *Child Care in Practice*, *23*(3), 305–321. https://doi.org/10.1080/13575279.2017.1329707
Gray, C., & MacBlain, S. (2015). *Learning theories in childhood* (2nd ed.). Sage.
Hawkins, K. (2014). Teaching for social justice, social responsibility and social inclusion: A respectful pedagogy for twenty-first century early childhood education. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, *22*(5), 723–738. https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2014.969085
Hayes, N. (2014). *Ireland's Early Years Policies: Past and Future.* Accessed March 21, 2017.http://www.startstrong.ie/files/Noirin_Hayes_Start_Strong_presentation_03.12_.14_.pdf
Ireland. (1998). *Education Act*. The Stationery Office.
Ireland. (2000). *Education (Welfare) Act*. The Stationery Office.
Kernan, M. (2007). *Play as a context for early learning and development*. NCCA.
Lacey, A., & Luff, D. (2001). *Trent Focus for research and development in primary Health care: An Introduction to qualitative analysis*. Trent Focus Group.
MacNaughton, G., & Hughes, P. (2008). *Doing action research in Early Childhood studies*. Open University Press.
Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., & Sylva, K. (2003). *Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) project: Findings from the Pre-school period*. The Institute of Education.
Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., & Sylva, K. (2015). *Effective Pre-school, primary and secondary education project (EPPSE 3-16+)*. The Institute of Education.
Mukherji, P., & Albon, D. (2015). *Research methods in Early Childhood, An introductory guide* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
National Children's Office (NCO). (2004). *Ready, steady, play: National play policy*. Department of Health and Children.
National Council Curriculum and Assessment. (2016). *AistearSíolta practice guide*. Accessed March 20, 2017. http://www.ncca.ie/en/Practice-Guide/Building-Partnerships-With-Parents/Overview/Pillar-Overview-Building-Partnerships-with-Parents.pdf
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. (1999). *Primary School Curriculum introduction*. The Stationary Office.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. (2009a). *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, principle and themes*. The Stationary Office.
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. (2009b). *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, guidelines for good practice*.
Pound, L. (2008). *How children learn*. Step Forward Publishing Limited.
Roberts-Holmes, G. (2014). *Doing your early years research project: A step by step guide. 3rd ed*. Sage Publications.
Ryan, E., & Ní Fhoghlú, T. (2012). *Learning to play while playing to learn.* Accessed March 10, 2017. https://www.into.ie/ROI/Publications/InTouch/FullLengthArticles/FullLengthArticles2012/LearningToPlay_April2012.pdf
Smith, P., & Pellegrini, A. (2013). *Learning through play. Encyclopedia of early Childhood development*. Goldsmiths University of London Paly UK.
United Nations. (1989). *The United Nations Convention on the rights of the child*. UND.
Wertsch, J. V. (1981). *The concept of activity in soviet psychology*. Sharpe.

Appendix 1.

Interview Questions

Interview Questions
1. In your opinion how do you think children can/could benefit from the everydayimplementation of the Aistear Curriculum in your setting?
2. How does your setting endeavour to implement the Aistear Curriculum?
3. Describe how or if Aistear impacts you in your everyday practice with children in yoursetting?
4. How do you use Aistear to address issues in children's lives such as equality, diversityand well-being?
5. How do you use Aistear to develop children's connections with others with regards torelationships, parents, family and community?
6. What is your role in children's connections with others when implementing Aistearwithin your setting?
7. Can you describe how children learn and develop in your setting?E.g. active learning, play and hands-on experiences, communication and language,holistic development and relevant and meaningful experiences.
8. Do you use Aistear as guidelines for assessing children's ongoing development in yousetting/classroom?
9. What resources and guidance are available to you in implementing Aistear?
10. How can Aistear's themes, aims and learning goals impact a child's development?
11. Is there anything you would change or like to develop more in Aistear, the EarlyChildhood Curriculum Framework?