

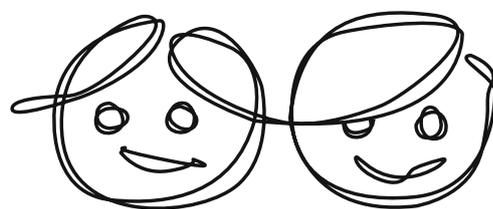
Early Childhood Policies and Systems in Eight Countries

Findings from IEA's
Early Childhood Education Study

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with

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IEA EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION STUDY

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The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), with Headquarters in Amsterdam, is an independent, international cooperative of national research institutions and governmental research agencies. It conducts large-scale comparative studies of educational achievement and other aspects of education, with the aim of gaining in-depth understanding of the effects of policies and practices within and across systems of education.

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Foreword

Educational policymakers around the world are increasingly aware that early childhood education (ECE) can have a strongly positive impact on a child's further development. Several countries have implemented reforms of their early childhood systems, generally focusing on a stronger emphasis on education and preparation for school. However, ECE systems remain diverse, with many countries still exploring the best options for their national educational system. This study gives an overview of the current status of ECE in eight different countries. This initial analysis enables in-depth comparison of policy provision within the different countries, with the goal of learning from the range of approaches to implementation adopted.

The report reveals that there are considerable differences in policies, delivery models, providers, access to, and participation in ECE, and in national expectations for child outcomes. Even the general aims of ECE differ among countries. However, almost all countries are investing extensively, and thus to investigate the success of such investments is natural. Helping policymakers and researchers in their efforts to better understand differing educational systems, and thus assisting with educational reform and improvement efforts, is central to the IEA's mission.

This study is intended to establish further avenues for investigation into the differences in ECE policies, practices and outcomes among different countries. The IEA envisions that outcome measures will be the subject of future research to progress knowledge in this area. Such assessments need to be carefully tailored to incorporate national goals for child outcomes, which may also be diverse.

An endeavor such as this could not be successful without the dedication of a large number of individuals, institutions, and organizations around the world. The IEA thanks the many experts, institutions, and organizations who made this project possible for their enthusiastic engagement and commitment to this project.

The IEA is particularly indebted to the outstanding teams of experts at the Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC), the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), the IEA Headquarters and the IEA Data Processing and Research Center (IEA DPC).

On behalf of IEA, I thank the principal authors of the report, Chris Pascal and Tony Bertram from CREC, who were largely responsible for the policy phase of the IEA's Early Childhood Education Study. My thanks go also to Caroline Sharp and Bethan Burge from NFER for their immense contribution to this study. Finally, my sincere gratitude goes to the study coordination at the IEA DPC, led by the study director Juliane Hencke and the study coordinator Marta Kostek, whose contribution to the content, as well as the overall management of the study, cannot be overstated.

I also thank the Project Advisory Committee (PAC): Cristina Stringher, Elena Yudina, Sylvia Eyzaguirre, and Sun Jin, and additionally Agnes Stancel-Piatak, Steffen Knoll, Sabine Meinck, Hannah Köhler, Paulína Koršňáková and Roel Burgers (all from the IEA). The IEA Technical Executive Group (TEG) provided valuable feedback to the study design and the report format, and the IEA Publication Editorial Committee (PEC), under the lead of Seamus Hegarty, ensured the high quality of the final publication. Gillian Wilson edited the report. Finally, my sincere thanks go to the national centers that provided the study finance, as well as the data for the report.

My thanks also go to the country representatives: Josef Basl, Irena Borkovcova, Gabriela Cares Osorio, Kristin Flanagan, Dana Kelly, Grethe Kragh-Muller, Tiina Peterson, Charlotte Ringmose, Piotr Rycielski, Kamil Sijko, Cristina Stringher, Marika Veisson, and Elena Yudina. The country representatives provided invaluable input throughout the study, reviewing and completing the Policy Questionnaire, an effort that required substantial research to gather all the information required, as well as commenting on the content of this Report. I am grateful for their unstinting commitment to this project.

Dirk Hastedt

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, IEA
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