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THE NETHERLANDS

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report author

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1. ECEC governance

Historically, the Dutch childcare context was characterised by a 'split system' with two separate sectors for young children, namely, childcare and education, each with its own pedagogical roots (see Bahle 2009; Bennett and Tayler 2006). The Netherlands now have a partially unified early childhood education and care system with involvement of two ministries. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (*Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid - SZW*) is responsible for the governance of childcare at national level (ECEC settings for children 0–4 years; after school care 4–13 years; family day care, 0–13 years). The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (*Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap - OCW*) is both responsible for the governance of early childhood education for disadvantaged children (*voor- en vroegschoolse educatie*, 2½–4 years) at national level and for the early education of 4- to 5-year olds in the *Basisschool*. Co-ordination, co-operation and integration have become a matter of urgency, and with the implementation of a law in 2010 (*Wet ontwikkelingskansen door kwaliteit en educatie, Wet OKE*) for harmonising and integrating preschool facilities and childcare, both sectors are now covered by the same laws and regulations.

Since the introduction of the Childcare Act, which came into force on 1 January 2005, it has been mandatory for each childcare centre to comply with four pedagogic objectives: the Act states that a responsible and high-quality childcare facility must offer children a safe and caring environment, promoting personal competence, strengthening social competence, as well as transmitting norms and values (see Riksen-Walraven 2004). In addition, the Act stipulates that these facilities must have a parents' committee. Currently, a new Childcare Act is under preparation.

Inspections of childcare facilities and compliance procedures are located at the local level of the municipalities. The municipal public health services are responsible for conducting the childcare centre inspections. The inspections are conducted at least annually, during which the childcare inspectors assess whether or not childcare centres meet the national quality requirements as stated in The Dutch Childcare Act (2005). These national quality requirements cover seven different domains: parental participation, personnel, health and safety, buildings and interior design, group size and child-caregiver ratio, pedagogical policy and practice and complaint settlement. The findings of the inspection are registered in a public inspection report including advice on whether or not to carry out legal compliance procedures, which must be sent to the municipal authority.

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

In 2015, 68,000 persons worked in the childcare sector (Brancheorganisatie Kinderopvang 2016). This number includes all staff, not just contact staff. *Table 1* distinguishes between different types of contact staff categories and also categorises the core practitioners (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see Box 1 at the end of this section).

Table 1

Netherlands: ECEC staff in centre-based settings

Job title	Main ECEC work-place settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/ EQF level/ ISCED[1] level
Childcare sector				
Pedagogisch medewerker (also often called *Leidster*) **Pedagogical Worker** *Former profile:* Social Care Professional *Current profile:* Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional	*Dagopvang in kinderdagverblijf* **Childcare centre** (*lit.:* day care in childcare centre) 3 months–4 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility in same-age or mixed-age group	3 months–4 years	3 years upper secondary vocational course in Pedagogical Work ECTS points: n/a[2] EQF level: 3 or 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 3 or 4
Peuterspeelzaalleidster or *Pedagogisch medewerker* **Toddler Playgroup Caregiver** or **Pedagogical Worker** *Former profile:* Social Care Professional *Current profile:* Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional	*Reguliere peuter-speelzaal* **Playgroup** (*lit.:* regular play group) 2½–4 years *Peuterspeelzaal met voor- en vroeg-schoolse educatie (vve)* **Playgroup with early intervention programme** 2½–4 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility	Children of all ages, also adulta	3 years upper secondary vocational course in Pedagogical Work ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 3 or 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 3
(Pre-) Primary education sector				
Leerkracht **Primary School Teacher** *Profile:* Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional	*Basisschool* **Primary school** 4–12 years (including pre-primary class for 4- to 5-year olds)	Core practitioner with group responsibility	4–12 years	4 years higher education institution (*Pedagogisch Academie voor het basisonderwijs – PABO*) ***or*** 5 years higher education institution (*academische PABO*) ECTS points: 240 EQF level: 5/6 ISCED 2013-F: 0113 ISCED 2011: 6
Onderwijsassistent **Teaching Assistant**	*Basisschool* **Primary school** 4–12 years (including pre-primary class for 4- to 5-year olds)	Qualified co-worker Teacher's class assistant	4–12 years	3 years upper secondary vocational course in Pedagogical Work ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 4

[1] UNESCO 2012, 2014.
[2] n/a not applicable

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories for core practitioners (adapted from Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

- *Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0– 6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional* (focus on pre-primary *and* primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social Care/Health Care Professional* (both narrow focus, 0–3, or broad focus, sometimes including adults)

2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

Childcare sector 0-4 years

The large majority of personnel working in the **childcare 0-4 sector** have a certificate awarded for the vocational training for childcare at intermediate level (*Pedagogisch Werk* or the previous *Sociaal-Pedagogisch Werk*). The minimum requirement is a vocational qualification at ISCED level 3, but it seems that the number of caregivers with a certificate at ISCED level 4 is slowly increasing. In a random national sample of caregivers in the national Quality Assessment of 2012 (Fukkink, Gevers Deynoot-Schaub, Helmerhorst, Bollen, and Riksen-Walraven 2013), 56% of the staff were educated at ISCED level 3 and 44% at level 4. A recent study showed no significant differences between educational levels of staff in childcare centres and play groups (Veen, Fukkink, Gevers Deynoot-Schaub, Heurter, Helmerhorst, and Bollen 2014).

All Dutch caregivers also need a certificate of conduct (*Verklaring Omtrent het Gedrag (VOG)*). This is a document through which the Dutch State Secretary for Security and Justice declares that the applicant has not committed any criminal offences that are relevant to the performance of his or her duties (e.g., sexual child abuse). Obviously, this certificate is not a qualification in the professional sense of the word, but it is a requirement for contact staff in the Netherlands.

Staff in the Dutch ECEC workforce are predominantly female. The number of men has always been modest in childcare and has diminished further for work with children aged 0 to 4 years (Van Polanen *et al.* forthcoming). Male staff are more frequent in after school childcare settings (4–12 years). Teachers in primary schools are also predominantly female.

The ethnicity of ECEC staff is mixed. In the last large scale childcare/day care assessment (Fukkink et al. 2013), about one in 11 caregivers was not born in the Netherlands. Dutch was the home language for 92% of the caregivers. There is local variation in the composition of staff, which reflects differences in the population between the major cities in the urban part of the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht) and other parts of the country. For example, Amsterdam and subsequently Rotterdam and The Hague have recently become 'majority-minority cities' (Crul, Uslu, and Lelie 2016), where no one ethnic group can be described as a majority group, and the superdiversity of these cities is reflected in the child population and staff in these urban areas.

Finally, the length of working experience of staff in the childcare sector has steadily increased in the 21st century, as reported in nationally representative samples. In 1995, the average length of working experience was 5.5 years; by 2008 it had risen to 8.4 years; and in 2012 the average length was 8.9 years. Also, the mean age of staff has increased from 31.2 years in 1995 to 33.2 years in 2012.

In the 2012 national assessment, caregivers worked, on average, 27.7 hours per week, equal to 3.5 days per week. Caregivers in play groups work fewer hours per week. This is related to the

fact that childcare centres have a full-day programme, whereas play groups operate on a half-day basis.

Table 2
Netherlands: Structural composition of ECEC workforce: childcare 0-4 sector

Staff categories	Year / Proportion of workforce	
Staff with specialist higher education degree • Bachelor degree in social work, pedagogy or education • Higher level academic degree	2012: Managers/centre heads: **73%** 2012: Managers/centre heads: **4%**	
Staff with specialist vocational qualification* (ISCED level 4)	2012: approx. **44%**	Managers: **23%**
Staff with specialist vocational qualification* (ISCED level 3)	2012: approx. **56%**	
Staff with non-specialist qualification	n/a	
Staff with no formal IPS	n/a	
Specialist support staff (e.g. speech therapists)	n/a	
Male staff	No systematically compiled national data, presumably **<1%** for preschool population in childcare About 15% for primary school, but percentage is presumably lower for lower grades (grades 1 and 2, children 4-6 years)	
Staff with a background of migration	No systematically compiled national data, about **10%***	

* Fukkink et al. 2012.

Managers in childcare centres

The educational background of managerial staff is diverse. According to the most recent national quality assessment (2012), the majority of managers had a Bachelor-level qualification (73%, with a background in social work, pedagogy or education). A further 23% were educated through an intermediate level vocational route, ISCED 3 or 4.4% of managers had an academic degree (Master's or PhD).

Pre-primary sector 4-5 years in schools

Teachers in the *Basisschool* who work with 4- to 5-year olds have a Bachelor-level qualification (*Pedagogisch Academie voor het basisonderwijs - PABO*) and the course of studies lasts 4 years. In recent years, some IPS institutes in Amsterdam, Utrecht and Nijmegen have been offering, in close collaboration with the university, a new type of teacher education/training which combines a vocational track at higher education level and an academic track in a five-year IPS route (instead of 4 years). More specifically, the regular teacher education course is complemented with educational, pedagogic and research modules at academic bachelor level. This type of teacher preparation is referred to as academic teacher education/training (*academische PABO*).

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational

Childcare sector 0-4 years

The pre-service training requirement for the childcare sector in the Netherlands is a three-year upper secondary vocational course in Pedagogical Work. Also the training routes for Social Cultural Work (*Sociaal-cultureel werker*, SCW) and Educational Assistant (*Onderwijsassistent*), both vocational qualifications at intermediate level, qualify for childcare work. The entry requirement for this education is the pre-vocational track of secondary education or equivalent

educational levels. This Pedagogical Work training has two levels: EQF 3 and 4. The majority of caregivers have a certificate at EQF level 3. The Dutch pre-service training distinguishes, at both level 3 and level 4 between two learning paths: the school-based pathway and the on-the-job training pathway. In the school-based pathway, school is the largest part of their education (about 60%) and students tend to be younger than in the on-the-job training route. Students combine this with internships, starting from their first year. In the on-the-job training pathway, students work mainly in childcare as trainees and they combine this with school experience (about 20%).

The national vocational training for childcare has shifted its broad focus on care in general (e.g., children, elderly, handicapped people) to one on care for children, reflecting a change from social care work to pedagogical work.

There is no certificate at higher educational level (EQF 5 or 6) which is required for employees in the childcare sector. This level is not included in the current childcare regulations for staff and the required qualifications. However, there are a number of types of vocational training at Bachelor level which qualify for ECEC work, including both an Associate Degree in education (AD for pedagogic-educational co-worker, childcare, educational support worker) and a Bachelor level degree (primary school education, pedagogy, social work, cultural-societal work, pedagogical management).

Table 3

Netherlands: Pedagogical Worker (IPS)

Job title in Dutch: *Pedagogisch Medewerker, Leidster* **Profile**: Formerly: Social Care professional; currently: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional
Entry requirements: Completion of secondary education or equivalent
Professional studies: 3-year upper secondary vocational course in Pedagogical Work
Award: Certificate in Pedagogical Work
ECTS points: n/a **EQF level:** 3 or 4 **ISCED 2013-F:** 0922 **ISCED 2011**: 3 or 4
Main ECEC workplaces: *Kinderdagverblijf* (childcare centre, 0-4 years**);** *Reguliere peuterspeelzaal* (regular playgroup, 2.5-4 years)

Note: Also the qualification routes for social cultural work (*Sociaal-cultureel werker.,* SCW) and Educational Assistant (*Onderwijsassistent*), which have similar qualification requirements, qualify for working in childcare settings.

Pre-primary education sector 4-5 years

Table 4

Netherlands: Primary School Teacher (pre-primary)

Job title in Dutch: *Leerkracht* **Profile**: Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional
Route 1:
Entry requirements: University entrance qualification
Professional studies: 4 years of study at a vocational higher education institution specialising in pedagogy ('Pedagogical Academy')
Award: Professional Bachelor (*Pedagogisch Academie voor het basisonderwijs - PABO*)
ECTS points: 240 **EQF level:** 5 **ISCED 2013-F:** 0113 **ISCED 2011:** 6
Main ECEC workplace: *Basisschool,* working with 4-12 year olds

Job title in Dutch: *Leerkracht* **Profile**: Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional
Route 2: **Entry requirements:** University entrance qualification **Professional studies:** 5 years of study at a vocational higher education institution specialising in pedagogy in close collaboration with the regional university **Award:** Academic Bachelor (*academische PABO*) **ECTS points:** 240 **EQF level:** 6 **ISCED 2013-F:** 0113 **ISCED 2011:** 6 **Main ECEC workplace:** *Basisschool,* working with 4-12 year olds (4-8, 8-12)

3.2 Competencies and curricula in the IPS programmes of core practitioners

Pedagogical Worker (*Pedagogisch Medewerker*)

Competence specifications: Following the national profile, as described by the national curriculum organisation Calibris, the curriculum should teach students in the planning, practice and institutional skills domain (see Fukkink 2010). The Calibris profile distinguishes different institutional tasks, often with an emphasis on a managerial role. According to this profile, the curriculum should teach students co-ordination skills (e.g., the division of tasks in a team) and supervision skills (e.g., observing colleagues and discussing their performance). Furthermore, the curriculum should ensure that childcare workers can develop and implement new policy guidelines in the daily practice of a childcare centre (e.g., revising or updating a centre's policy document and discussing it with the parental committee and colleagues). Students should master these core competencies in their pre-service training.

An innovative part of the Dutch curriculum is devoted to the explicit training of seven interaction skills that are relevant for interactions between caregivers and children (see below). These competencies are an important part of the new curriculum.

Curricular areas: The curriculum of the current vocational training now has a stronger link with working in ECEC and childcare in general. Since recently, the curriculum also includes explicit training of language and interaction skills (including sensitive responsivity, respect for autonomy, structuring and limit setting, verbal communication, developmental stimulation, fostering positive peer interactions (see Helmerhorst *et al*. 2014). In an ongoing research project, teachers of vocational education are supported by the Amsterdam of University to implement the new part of the curriculum related to the training of interaction skills.

Quality assessments of nationally representative samples have shown that qualified childcare workers have relatively high scores for the basic interactive skills of sensitive responsiveness, respect for autonomy, and structuring and limit setting but lower scores for the more educational skills of developmental stimulation and fostering positive peer interactions; verbal communication takes a middle position. The divide between emotional support and class management on the one hand and instructional support on the other hand has also repeatedly been found for qualified staff in studies in other countries (Helmerhorst, Riksen-Walraven, Fukkink, Tavecchio, and Gevers Deynoot-Schaub 2016). The (ongoing) development of a pedagogic curriculum for the younger child (0-6 years) reflects the fact that academic discussion about the pedagogic-didactic approach in the Netherlands is no longer framed within the traditional dichotomy 'play versus learning' or 'care versus education'. Moreover, the changed Dutch childcare context striving towards harmonising and integrating preschool facilities and childcare may provide a fertile breeding ground for further developments. The recent rise of integrated child centres (*Integrale Kindcentra - IKC*) with closer cooperation between primary

school and childcare may also stimulate the further development of balanced pedagogical approaches. However, more research is needed to monitor current and future developments in practice.

Primary School Teacher *(Leerkracht)*

Competence requirements: Seven competencies with Dublin Descriptors are distinguished in the national curriculum of the teacher education programme for primary school teachers (*Pedagogisch Academie voor het basisonderwijs - PABO*): interpersonal; pedagogical; didactic; organisational; team collaboration; collaboration with local community; reflection and professional development. Specific indicators are distinguished at different levels during pre-service training: qualified for training after year 1 (level 1), qualified for final traineeship (level 2) and qualified to start practising in schools (Bachelor level, level 3).

Curricular areas: The national teacher education profile distinguishes between seven key competency areas (see above). The (pedagogical) content knowledge includes language, maths, geography, history, physics, biology, music, drama, arts, gymnastics, ethical education or philosophy. Further, teacher education at different institutes may also include complementary curricular areas or a special emphasis (e.g., urban education, integrated child centre, science).

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

Childcare staff

Staff in childcare need a vocational training certificate (i.e., candidates with an academic master's degree in pedagogy, psychology or educational sciences are not permitted to work in childcare because their education is not vocational). Persons without the regular vocational certificates may start an APL procedure (assessment of prior learning) with additional, individualised schooling. This procedure may last three years with about 12 hours of training on a weekly basis.

Pre-primary education staff

Teacher candidates may also enter the teacher education for primary school teachers (*PABO*) if they have finished an alternative study route at professional bachelor or academic bachelor level (*zij-instromers*). For career advancement, staff may start a new study at a higher vocational level.

Recently, it is also possible for teachers working in primary schools and with an academic background to apply for a PhD scholarship (*Lerarenbeurs*).

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

Childcare sector 0-4 years

The Dutch pre-service childcare training routes distinguish between two learning paths: the school-based pathway and the on-the-job training pathway. The on-the-job training pathway is offered at EQF 3 and 4. This latter type of IPS is currently less frequent, possibly because, in a declining childcare market, it has become less relevant for childcare providers to invest in future staff with contracts for on-the-job trainees. Workplace-based learning starts at the first year and continues till the last year. This workplace-based learning is supervised by an educator from the IPS institution and by a staff member of an accredited job training childcare cen-

tre. Job training centres and vocational training centres ('ROC's') may collaborate at a regional level to advance professional development.

Pre-primary education 4-5 years

Workplace-based learning is a regular part of teacher education programmes for primary school teachers (PABO). Students have an internship in both the lower, middle and upper primary grades. Work-based learning starts in the first year of the PABO and students are placed in a primary school for one or two days per week. Students play an increasingly active role, starting with observing the class, then assisting with part of a lesson, and finally teaching classes for part of the day. In the final year of the Bachelor's degree studies, workplace-based learning takes place during an extensive period of half a year in which the student is responsible for the class and is also a full member of the school team (*lio-stage*). Workplace-based learning is supervised by a tutor from the IPS institution and by a staff member of the host school. Dutch teacher education (PABO) works with primary schools in regional networks to exchange findings and to promote the professional level of the field.

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

The professional development of staff working in childcare settings is high on the Dutch educational agenda. Increasing attention is being paid to ongoing professional learning activities that complement initial vocational studies. Regular training approaches do not seem to produce satisfying results in terms of instructional support, and additional efforts seem to be required in development and training. In 2012, the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs developed an agenda for improving the pedagogical quality of childcare together with stakeholders. Fitting in with this agenda, the Dutch National Bureau for Quality in Childcare (*Bureau Kwaliteit Kinderopvang, BKK)* formulated a policy proposal (BKK 2012). A cornerstone in their policy is the provision of training aimed at the improvement of pedagogical interaction skills. This policy is informed by scientific evidence from Dutch experimental research which showed that specialised training can improve the process quality of childcare and the pedagogical quality of interactions between staff and children. International and national research has shown that early childhood teachers with higher levels of professional training are more often engaged in sensitive and stimulating interactions with children; they provide more sensitive care, are more involved with children, and offer richer learning experiences (see also Egert 2015; Egert, Fukkink, and Eckhardt, to be published; Eurofound 2015; Fukkink and Lont 2009; Werner, Linting, Vermeer, and van IJzendoorn 2016 for meta-analytic reviews of international childcare studies).

Childcare staff

The National Office for Quality in Childcare, BKK, has stimulated the innovation and dissemination of pedagogical frameworks and coordinates CPD activities for ECEC staff at the national level, supported by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. The office currently coordinates two training programmes of two different providers: *Oog voor Interactie*[3], provided by the Dutch Youth Institute, and *TINK* training (*Taal- en Interactievaardigheden in de Kinderopvang*)[4], provided by the national organisation Sardes. Both types of CPD focus on training the interaction skills and language proficiency of caregivers. The training programme *Oog voor Interactie* comprises six group meetings (3.5 hours each), some individual coaching with video feedback, three homework assignments, and one concluding session with a small group of

[3] *Oog voor interactie*, Eye for interaction
[4] *TINK*, Training Language and Interaction skills in childcare

trainees. The *TINK* approach comprises eight sessions of 3.5 hours each, seven practical assignments (4 hours each), eight team meetings (2 hours each), reading the syllabus (4 hours), and a concluding assignment (4 hours), totalling 80 training hours. Attendance for both programmes is voluntary and is paid for by the employer. The certificates gained from these two training programmes are not formally recognised in terms of career advancement. In an ongoing experimental study, the effects of the newly developed programmes on staff interactions skills are evaluated.

Also the national childcare sector organisation (*Brancheorganisatie Kinderopvang*) is currently involved in a pilot for lifelong learning (*Permanente Educatie Pedagogisch Professionals*). This project aims to stimulate professional development with modules, tests and certificates for ECEC staff.

Pre-primary education staff

Continuing professional development of Primary School Teachers takes place in different initiatives. The aforementioned *TINK* and *Oog voor Interactie* training programmes are also available for pre-primary education staff. Further, specific language training has recently been provided on a large, national scale to raise the linguistic competencies of staff; if teachers are not certified at a certain proficiency level (level 3F, which is equal to an ISCED level 5 or Bachelor level), they are not allowed to work in a pre-primary education setting.

One of the themes that has recently received attraction in the Netherlands is urban education and working as a teacher in an urban context (Fukkink and Oostdam 2016). Urban education may be an integral part of the IPS programme, but also plays a role in continuing professional development. For ECEC staff, early intervention programmes for young children are an important topic in urban contexts.

Primary School Teachers may choose to start a Master's degree in education. Popular courses are the Master in Educational Leadership, Master in Educational Needs and Master in Pedagogy, which are accredited by the Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie (NVAO).

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

Professionalisation: investing in childcare-specific competencies

The former vocational training programme for childcare (*Sociaal Pedagogisch Werk*) offered a general curriculum for pre-service workers who would care in their profession with a diverse population (infants, youth, elderly, handicapped people, etc.). The current vocational education/training (*Pedagogisch Werk*) (available since 2011) is tailored to working with children and has a clearer focus on childcare. In addition, explicit training of skills for the interaction between staff and children is included in the current curriculum (as explained in section 3.2).

Professionalisation: investing in interaction skills in in-service development

In an ongoing project, a successful in-service training format (see Helmerhorst et al. 2016) is being adapted to and implemented in a vocational training context, supported by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. An ongoing research project evaluates the effects of this in-service training on the interaction skills of pre-service ECEC teachers (NCKO 2017).

Professionalisation: investing in collaboration

Recently, extensive cooperation between schools, teacher training institutions and universities has been taking place in three collaborative field projects ("academische werkplaats" or "werkplaats") in Amsterdam, Tilburg and Utrecht with external funding. In these projects, professional development occurs in field-based research and development projects between a

university, the teacher education department of a university of applied sciences and several primary schools.

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

Caregiver-Child Interactions

Source: Helmerhorst, K.O.W., J.M. Riksen-Walraven, R.G. Fukkink, L.W.C. Tavecchio and M.J.J.M. Gevers Deynoot-Schaub. 2016. (see *References* for details)

Aims: The study aimed to investigate the effects of training on the interactive skills of pedagogical staff in everyday caregiver-child interactions.

Procedure: Previous studies underscored the need to improve caregiver–child interactions in early child care centres. In this study we used a randomised controlled trial to examine whether a 5-week video feedback training can improve six key interactive skills of caregivers in early child care centres: sensitive responsiveness, respect for autonomy, structuring and limit- setting, verbal communication, developmental stimulation, and fostering positive peer interactions. A total of 139 caregivers from 68 early child care groups for 0- to 4-year old children in Dutch child care centres participated in this RCT, 69 in the intervention condition and 70 in the control condition. Caregivers' interactive skills during everyday interactions with the children were rated from videotape using the Caregiver Interaction Profile (CIP) scales at pretest, posttest, and follow-up 3 months after the posttest.

Findings*:* Results at posttest indicate a significant positive training effect on all six caregiver interactive skills. Effect sizes of the CIP training range between $d = 0.35$ and $d = 0.79$. Three months after the post-test, caregivers in the intervention group still scored significantly higher on sensitive responsiveness, respect for autonomy, verbal communication, and fostering positive peer interactions than caregivers in the control group with effect sizes ranging between $d = 0.47$ and $d = 0.70$.

Implications: This study shows that the quality of caregiver–child interactions can be improved for all six important caregiver skills, with a relatively short training program. Possible ways to further improve the training and to implement it in practice and education are discussed.

Professional development

Source: Henrichs, L.F., P.O. Slot, and P.P.M. Leseman. 2016. (see *References* for details)

Background: The article reviews findings of the CARE European project Curriculum Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European ECEC.

Aims: A recent review of international publications was conducted to identify factors for effective professional development in an ECEC context.

Procedure: The review includes other (meta-analytic) reviews, individual empirical studies, and 'good practice' reports of different (European) countries.

Findings: The authors emphasise three core elements for professional development: permanence (i.e., continuous monitoring of professional development), collectivity (i.e., partnership with different stakeholders, including parents), and reflection (i.e., discussing the alignment between pedagogical theory and ECEC practice). Furthermore, the authors also highlight gaps in our current knowledge base.

Education in an urban context

Source: Fukkink, R.G. and R. Oostdam (eds). 2016. (see *References* for details)

In the Netherlands, there is an increasing interest in urban education for ECEC practitioners, elementary and secondary school teachers.

This recent handbook aims to facilitate teaching urban education in teacher education and educational science with contributions by authors with an educational, sociological or pedagogical background, addressing various topics of upbringing and teaching in an urban context from the perspective of professionals.

The different authors make clear that working in an urban context requires specific competencies for teachers and pedagogues, distinguishing between dealing with diversity of young people, diversity of parents and the diversity and complex dynamics of cities.

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

The salary of a caregiver with a full-time job ranges from between 1,900€ and 2,600€ per month, depending on the length of working experience. The salaries of core practitioners in childcare settings are, on average, lower than those of primary school teachers. However, it is possible to live on a childcare salary as a professional caregiver. The salary of a primary school teacher varies according to length of working experience and professional award level, ranging between 2500€ and 4000€ per month.

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

Dutch society is characterised by part-time work and the childcare sector is no exception. According to the most recent national quality assessment of childcare for 0-4 years (Fukkink et al. 2013), caregivers worked, on average, 27.7 hours per week (standard deviation: 6.5). Teachers in primary schools may also work part-time.

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

The *Bureau Kwaliteit Kinderopvang* (BKK) is a non-profit organization in the Netherlands to improve the quality of early childhood education and care. It was established and is governed by the national associations of employers, employees and parents in the field of ECEC. From 2013-2017, BKK is co-ordinating a programme called *Quality Impulse*, commissioned and subsidised by the Dutch government. This programme is aligned to the policy agenda of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment in consultation with different stakeholders. With the *Quality Impulse* initiative, BKK is providing and maintaining an innovative and effective improvement of ECEC and sustaining continuing professional development in the field. The programme has the potential to contribute to the healthy and balanced development of all children who attend ECEC in the Netherlands, aiming to reach both centre-based and home-based childcare.

In order to realise this important ~~and prestigious~~ goal, BKK is facilitating CPD programmes, the development of a broad integral quality framework by an independent committee and transmitting it to the workforce. In addition, BKK is asking the field for their views on quality issues and is initiating academic research. The ultimate goal of BKK with the *Quality Impulse* is to support childcare providers to independently measure and guarantee the quality of early childhood practice in their childcare settings, and to make their quality results transparent (source: http://www.stichtingbkk.nl/over-stichting-bkk/about-bkk).

8.4 Non-contact time

There are no national regulations regarding non-contact time for Dutch ECEC staff. A recent study (see Veen et al. 2015) indicated that caregivers in playgroups with early intervention programmes have a larger number of hours of work stipulated in their contract, compared to

caregivers in regular playgroups, and this difference may be explained by the larger number of hours provided for development, coordination and training for preschool staff.

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

Since 2010, the Dutch childcare market has been declining following serious budget cuts by the government and, subsequently, a significant drop in demand for places in childcare settings has occurred as many parents decided to make less use of formal childcare. A shift was observed from the use of formal childcare to informal childcare arrangements (e.g., grandparents taking care of their grandchildren). This means that there are no significant staff shortages at the moment. In terms of recruitment, recent trends show a rise in the number of caregivers with EQF level 4.

In primary schools, the number of pupils is also in decline. It is expected that in 2019 there will be 150,000 fewer pupils compared to 2012, with a corresponding loss of 12,000 teacher jobs. About 100 primary schools have to close their doors annually.
(https://www.poraad.nl/themas/krimp).

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

There is a cautious trend towards increased professionalisation of the ECEC workforce (see Snyder, Hemmeter, Meeker, Kinder, Pasia, and McLaughlin 2012; Zaslow 2009). If the professional development of Pedagogical Workers and others working with young children is to be supported effectively, four key challenges emerge:

Professionalisation: different educational levels

A new Childcare Act is expected to be implemented in the near future. The new Act encourages childcare providers to also employ staff at Bachelor level. This should result in a workforce with mixed ISCED levels, varying from level 3 to level 5 – or, if including the primary school teachers, level 6. It would seem important, therefore, to describe the professional profiles of the new staff at Bachelor level and monitor the professional and career development for this new group and their colleagues. For example, the staff qualified at Bachelor level may employ different work strategies, such as being active as a member in a team with other contact staff; acting as a coach or mentor to other staff; being responsible for planning and innovation; carrying out managerial tasks; communicating in depth with parents; being responsible for children with special needs; contacting and co-operating with colleagues from primary school, etc. Furthermore, it would be important to monitor the career development in a longitudinal perspective because the new staff may start initially with the more regular activities of contact staff and may only later in their professional development have different (or: complementary) responsibilities. It is also possible that staff with a Bachelor-level qualification may be more likely to leave the ECEC profession.

Professionalisation: investing in interdisciplinary skills

Coordination between childcare and the primary education system is a topical social issue in the Netherlands. Cooperation between primary education and childcare is not a given, and both childcare and school settings are currently searching for appropriate forms in terms of organisational governance and pedagogical practice. A practical question that has, therefore, recently received increasing attention is how various pedagogical professionals from different organisations and operating from within their own specialisms, can best work together to achieve an integrated range of services within a coordinated system of cooperation: how do professionals with different professional backgrounds (child care, education, youth care) work together in integrated child services? (see also Bennett and Tayler 2006; Littlechild and Smith

2013). This requires a broader perspective on teams and professional networks instead of individual staff members. Also the cooperation between Pedagogical Workers in a childcare setting and Pre-primary Teachers in an educational setting deserves more attention.

Professionalisation: investing in professional networks in ECEC practice

In-service development of ECEC staff is currently provided in a training format. Other formats may complement training. For example, team intervision, supervision, and learning communities seem promising complementary approaches for ECEC. Also the "(academic) workplaces" that already exist for teachers of primary and secondary schools in different places, may offer opportunities for professional development.

This challenge will become even more urgent if the Dutch ECEC workforce becomes more diverse with professionals at ISCED levels 3, 4 and 5/6 and with professionals from child care, education and youth care. Interdisciplinary networks may support interprofessional practice and collaboration (type 1: multidisciplinary networks), but also key stakeholders from different teams may organise meetings in (peer) supervision groups (type 2: mono-disciplinary specialist networks).

Professionalisation: evidence-informed practice

Scientific research has shown that not all pre- or in-service interventions for ECEC staff are (equally) effective (Egert 2015; Fukkink and Lont 2007). Moreover, there are many training modules in the field, but solid proof for their effectiveness is scarce. It is vital for future professional development that innovative practices are developed in an initial stage and are evaluated in a next phase. Mixed methods evaluation in controlled experimental designs may be helpful in charting the different learning experiences and learning gains, but also pitfalls of the different stakeholders.

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