



## PRESS RELEASE

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# Delivering curriculum in the early years

Research by **Children in Europe** has raised questions over whether early years practitioners in the UK need to be more highly qualified in order to deliver a formal pre-school curriculum.

Only pre-school teachers are qualified to degree level in the UK. Other early years staff, including nursery nurses and support staff, are not required to be qualified to such a high level, yet they still have an important role to play in the delivery of the 3-5 curriculum.

The pre-school curriculum in England and Wales is 128 pages long. In Scotland it is less prescriptive with just 60 pages and children are not formally assessed.

Research published in the new issue nine of **Children in Europe**, shows that Denmark's pre-school curriculum is just two pages long and there are no formal assessments. However, 65 per cent of all staff working in Danish early years centres are educated to degree level. In Sweden, 50 per cent of early years staff have a four-year university degree. Here there is no national curriculum, only a 22-page set of guidelines. Barbara Korpi, senior advisor at the Swedish Ministry of Education and Culture, said: "There is a recognition that if pre-school teachers are to decide teaching methods, they need to be able to plan, reflect and evaluate, and use tools like pedagogical documentation." Only two per cent of the staff in early years centres in Germany have high level teacher training and this is causing concern about implementing the curriculum. Improved professional education is just one of the supports Germany is focusing on to implement its curriculum successfully.

Peter Moss, professor of early childhood provision at the Institute of Education in London and editor of **Children in Europe**, warned that staff training must ensure that practitioners are equipped with the necessary skills to be able to take on the

responsibility of delivering a flexible curriculum, rather than simply being trained to be highly effective “technicians” of a specific curriculum.

He said: “In England we need to consider where we want to be in 10 years - with an ever more detailed curriculum applied by technicians or with a broad framework curriculum which allows scope for teachers, parents and the local community to interpret and implement as part of a participatory process.”

John Bennett, a consultant for the Directorate of education at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), said: “Formal curriculum have been spreading rapidly into the early years field but the approaches vary considerably across Europe - from a detailed manual for early years workers to follow to a broad framework leaving room for early years workers to interpret. Some countries, such as Sweden, are giving their pre-school workers more freedom to decide the methods they use but recognise that this requires a professional well-educated workforce. Half of all those working in Swedish pre-school services are graduates.”

### **Notes for editors**

- Children in Europe is a magazine for everyone working with and for children from 0-10 and those interested in children’s issues. It is published simultaneously in eight languages by a network of national magazines. It aims to provide a forum for ideas, practice and information and contribute to the development of policy and practice at European and national levels. It is published in the UK by Children in Scotland, the national agency for voluntary, statutory, and professional organisations and individuals working with children and their families in Scotland, with the support of the Bernard van Leer Foundation.
- Issue 9 of Children in Europe, focuses on curriculum and assessment in early childhood services.

Content includes :

*John Bennett*: an overview of curriculum and assessment for children below compulsory school age

*Margaret Carr and Lesley Rameka (university of Waikato in New Zealand)*: the influence of Maori culture in New Zealand’s early years curriculum

*Mercedes Blasi, pedagogue in Barcelona’s early childhood education service*: the Spanish early years curriculum

*Barbara Martin Korpi, senior adviser at the Swedish Ministry of Education and Culture*: the introduction of the Swedish early years curriculum as part of a programme of wider reforms

*Viviane Bouysse, Head of Schools Section, French Ministry of Education*: the curriculum in nursery schools in France

*Stig G Lund, senior adviser to the pedagogue trade union BUPL*: the new curriculum guidelines in Danish early childhood services

*Pamela Oberhuemer, the Bavarian State Institute of Early Childhood Research:* how different states are approaching the challenge of Germany's first early years curriculum.

*Carlina Rinaldi, the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia:* distinctive approaches to curriculum and assessment in the Italian town of Reggio Emilia

*Ann Aberg, Swedish pre-school teacher:* how the work of Reggio Emilia inspired her to use pedagogical documentation

*Nada Pozar Matijasic, teacher in Slovenia:* how Slovenia has revolutionised its pre-school education and teacher training over the past ten years

*Sarah Klaus, executive director of the International Step by Step Association:* the progress and impact of a programme to promote child-centred practice and community involvement

*Carolyne Willow, national co-ordinator for the Children's Rights Alliance for England:* implications and limitations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

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