



QUALITY: Four Definitions of what Constitutes Quality in ECCD Programs

EXAMPLE 1

Identified by: L. J. Schweinhart, H. V. Barnes, & D. P. Weikart. 1993. *Significant Benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 27*. Ypsilanti, Michigan: High/Scope Press, pg. 17.

The authors define the elements of quality derived from their own research, and that of others, as follows:

- effective programs use explicitly stated, developmentally appropriate active-learning curricula that support children's self-initiated learning activities;
- effective teaching staff have been trained in early childhood education and do not change jobs often;
- effective administrators provide systematic in-service training on site and supervisory support of their staff's curriculum implementation;
- effective programs maintain classes of fewer than twenty 3- to 5-year-olds for every pair of teaching adults;
- in effective programs, staff treat parents as partners and engage in extensive outreach to parents, such as home visits at least monthly, to learn from parents and to help them understand the curriculum and their children's development.

EXAMPLE 2

Identified by: L. J. Schweinhart. 1981. *What Makes a Quality Preschool?*, *Keys to Early Childhood Education*, Vol 2, No. 4, April 1981.

Following are seven key elements that the High/Scope research indicates are essential to a quality preschool program. Many of these principles are also valid for day care centers, kindergartens, family day care homes and other settings where adults provide care for other people's children.

- **Program well managed, well monitored.** Supervisors must know what is going on in their programs on a day-to-day basis. They should be readily available to provide support, give realistic feedback, help solve problems and reward a job well done.

- **Parents involved in significant ways in educational development of the children.** Teaching staff should work with parents as partners. Vehicles for parent involvement might include home visits and parent meetings with opportunities for parents to volunteer to help in the classroom.
- **At least two adults in classroom to provide overall support and individual attention to children.** This team approach is more important than class size (which often gets more attention); a team has much greater flexibility in dealing with situations than does a solitary adult.
- **Significant amount of time spent in child/adult interaction.** Talking, sharing ideas, playing together—these are essential, with the child initiating much of the activity. Children need adults to challenge and support them in their activities.
- **Teachers trained in the curriculum, able to work together as a team and under supervision.** It is teachers who make quality programs work, training and support for them is crucial.
- **Evaluation component in program emphasizing day-to-day quality maintenance.** Evaluation tells administrators when a program is on the right track, or when it is in trouble.

Emphasizing quality will encourage teacher creativity and experimentation with new methods. It should never be equated with some narrow definition of perfection that keeps enthusiastic, competent teachers from following their creative hunches. Only through being with creative adults can young children learn to express their own creative impulses.

EXAMPLE 3

Identified by: R. G. Myers. 1995. *The Twelve Who Survive*. Ypsilanti, Michigan: High/Scope Press. (paperback edition)

- **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES** An effective programme requires clear aims and objectives that are set and shared by teachers and parents, understood by children and subject to modification through a process involving all of the interested parties. The process of agreeing upon such aims and objectives may be more important than the specific outcomes of the process.
- **EDUCATION AGENTS** Perhaps the most important element in an effective programme is the education agent. Effectiveness and quality are related to the continuous presence of sensitive, healthy, committed, loving and responsible adults, who are knowledgeable about how children develop (with knowledge acquired through experience and training), who interact with children in a consistent, respectful, supportive, and unthreatening way. Good education agents may be professionals or para-professionals.
- **CURRICULUM** Quality and effectiveness are related to use of a proven curriculum that takes a holistic view of a child's development, provides a variety of relevant, stimulating and enjoyable learning experiences helping them to set roots and learn to fly, encourages children to explore, play and initiate their own learning activities, and respects and attends to individual differences. A quality curriculum will integrate education and care while attending to physical, social and emotional needs as well as to cognitive or intellectual needs. It fosters a sound relation of the child to self, others and the environment. Many different curricula meet these criteria.

- **PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT** A clean, ventilated, stimulating, secure, healthy environment (locale) providing enough space for children to play is needed.
- **EVALUATION** Effectiveness and quality are fostered by the use of systematic and validated evaluation methods to adjust teaching to the specific needs of children.
- **ADULT/CHILD RATIO** Effective programmes have a ratio of children to adults (or of adults to adults) that is low enough to permit frequent interaction and personal attention.
- **TRAINING/SUPERVISION** Quality and effectiveness are related to meaningful training, initially, on the job, and through supervisory support, fostering continued professional and personal growth.
- **EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP** Strong educational leadership fosters quality and effectiveness, in which leaders devote considerable time to coordinating and managing while staying close to the daily process of education and socializing children.
- **PARENTAL AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION** Effectiveness and quality is improved by involvement/participation of families and communities as partners in the programme, helping it to function well and learning to improve their attention to young children in the process.
- **RESOURCES** Programmes require consistency and permanence related to a financial and material resources base sufficient to work in an appropriate way with children and to sustain educational actions over time without distracting education agents from their immediate educational task.

EXAMPLE 4

National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) Australia—Core Principles

The Quality Improvement and Accreditation System is administered by the National Childcare Accreditation Council. The functions of the Council include granting accreditation to long-day care centres, advising the Minister of Family Services on participation of centres in the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System, advising the Minister on matters related to good quality in childcare, conducting an ongoing review of the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (including the standards required) and maintaining a register of centres' accreditation status.

Members of the first Council were appointed by the Minister in 1993. The Council includes people with backgrounds in community-based and private long-day care centres, training institutions, trade unions and the Commonwealth Government and parents.

After July 1994 a new Council was established with an increased number of members including service providers (both community-based and private sector), representatives, and parent representatives elected by their respective constituents through State Accreditation Committees. Service provider representatives are either Directors/Coordinators or staff of long-day care centres. Parent representatives are parents with children in long-day care centres. The Minister appoints a number of other members to the Council including the independent chair and representatives of trade unions, training institutions, family day care and the Commonwealth Government.

The NCAC Principles are set out below.

AI: INTERACTIONS BETWEEN STAFF AND CHILDREN

1. Staff interactions with children are warm and friendly.
2. Staff treat all children equally and try to accommodate their individual needs: they respect diversity of background.
3. Staff treat all children equally and try to accommodate their individual needs: they treat both sexes without bias.
4. Staff use a positive approach in guidance and discipline.
5. Staff are responsive to children's feelings and needs.
6. Staff initiate and maintain communication with children and their communication conveys respect.
7. Staff show respect for children's developing competence, and foster their self esteem and independence.
8. Staff interact with children to stimulate their curiosity and thinking.
9. Staff create a pleasant atmosphere.

AII: INTERACTIONS BETWEEN STAFF AND PARENTS

10. There is verbal and written communication with all families about the centre.
11. There is active exchange of information between parents and staff.
12. There is an orientation process for new children and parents.
13. Parents and other family members are encouraged to be involved in the programme.

AIII: INTERACTIONS BETWEEN STAFF

14. Staff communicate well with each other.
15. Staff show respect for other members of the team.

PROGRAMME

16. The programme is planned to reflect the centre's philosophy and goals.
17. The programme incorporates learning experiences appropriate for each child as indicated by development records maintained by the centre.
18. The programme gives children the opportunity to make choices and take on new challenges.
19. The programme fosters personal and social development.
20. The programme fosters fine and gross motor skill development.
21. The programme fosters creative development and aesthetic awareness.
22. Toileting and nappy changing procedures meet individual needs and are positive experiences.
23. Sleep time and dressing procedures meet individual needs for rest, comfort and self-help.

24. Meal times are pleasant occasions.
25. The programme provides a wide range of individual and group experiences.
26. A daily timetable is planned to reflect children's needs, abilities and interests.
27. Procedures for routine activities are flexible and developmentally appropriate.
28. Transitions between activities are smooth.
29. The programme fosters intellectual development.
30. The programme fosters language development.
31. There is a balanced and developmentally appropriate programme.
32. The programme provides for children with special needs.
33. The programme is regularly evaluated in the light of state goals.

HEALTH

34. Staff are alert to the health and welfare of each child.
35. Staff try to ensure that children are clothed appropriately for indoor and outdoor play and for sleep.
36. Food and drinks meet children's daily nutritional requirements and are culturally appropriate.
37. Meal times promote healthy nutritional habits.
38. Food is prepared and stored hygienically.
39. Staff adhere to hygiene principles which reduce the spread of infectious diseases.
40. Staff encourage children to follow simple rules of hygiene.
41. Potentially dangerous products are inaccessible to children.
42. Buildings and equipment are safe and hygienic.
43. The centre maintains a record of children's immunizations.
44. The centre has written policies on hygiene, medical, emergency and accident procedures.
45. Staff are familiar with medical, emergency and accident procedures.
46. Staff supervise children at all times.
47. Information on health and other related issues is readily available to the staff.

STAFFING

48. Staff and parents consult on the programme and evaluate it together.
49. New staff are informed about the philosophy and goals of the centre.
50. The centre provides regular learning and training opportunities for staff.
51. The staff roster is arranged to provide continuity of care.
52. Information about the centre's management is readily available to staff and parents.

Excerpt from The Coordinators' Notebook, No. 18, copyright, the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development. 1997.

Early Childhood Counts: Programming Resources for Early Childhood Care and Development.
CD-ROM. The Consultative Group on ECCD. Washington D.C.: World Bank, 1999.