Call for papers: 
MJES Special Issue

Early Childhood Education & Care across the Mediterranean: 
Policies and practices arising from socio-cultural perspectives & traditions

Co-edited by
Professor Valerie Sollars, University of Malta
Dr Fathi Ihmeideh, Hashemite University, Jordan

This special issue will focus on policies and practices in early childhood education and care across the Mediterranean region. Whilst early childhood education and care has gained the interest and attention of governments across many countries, the policies and practices which are implemented warrant a degree of examination. The OECD publications *Starting Strong I* (2001) and *Starting Strong II* (2006) are among relatively recent and influential documents which have facilitated a comparative overview of practices and policies in the field of early childhood education and care. Twenty countries participated in the two reviews which took “a broad and holistic approach that considers how policies, services, families, and communities can support young children’s early development and learning” (2006, p. 12.)¹ A number of crucial issues were raised as a result of the country reviews with questions which are pertinent to all countries seeking to promote high quality provision for early childhood education and care.

- What motivation and justification do governments have for investing in early childhood education and care?
- Is there substantial investment and expenditure in the system to provide and maintain high quality provision?
- Who is responsible for determining policy in early childhood education and care? Indeed, are the policies adopted promoting education, care or both? How are these policies taking account of children’s development and the characteristics which impact on learning processes at a young age?
- How important is early childhood education and care in comparison to formal education and how smooth are the transitions from non-compulsory to compulsory education?
- Who is most likely to have access to good quality services? How are equal opportunities to affordable quality services ensured?
- How are early childhood services regulated? What structures and infrastructure support the services and how does this support reflect the societal and cultural views about early years’ education and care?
- What are the minimum qualifications staff is expected to have to work with young children? Are there appropriate opportunities for training both prior to securing a job as well as through in-service courses? What does it mean to be a professional early years’ educator? What are the working conditions for staff employed in the early years sector? Is gender representation an issue in the early years’ work force?

The special issues that is being planned will feature papers to:

- raise the visibility of ECEC policies and practices adopted and implemented in the Mediterranean region;
- provide insights which impact on the conceptualising of early childhood education and care;
- allow for a comparative analysis of practices and policies as they are articulated in different parts of the world.

Articles can be submitted to address any one of the following three broad categories:

- **Articles which focus on the field of ECEC and its development in light of changes in society over-time.** ECEC is inextricably linked to historical, political, social and cultural notions and practices dominant within regions, populations or countries. What are the various interpretations associated with ECEC? What is considered of paramount importance and therefore gets promoted between birth and the age of eight? What does it mean to be a child growing up in a Mediterranean country? To what extent do cultural, social, historical and political developments impinge on early childhood practices? How are demographics, family-rearing customs and arrangements as well as labour market forces shaping early childhood education policies? To what extent do practices elsewhere in the world reinforce or interfere with more traditional approaches to ECEC?

- **Articles which focus on early childhood experiences as they are lived within families and/or within formal, institutionalised early years’ centres, kindergartens or preschools.** Do children live their early childhood experience within the familiarity of their homes with parents, siblings and relatives or do they attend early childhood settings and centres from a young age? How are such institutions perceived? Is it desirable to have young children raised in early years settings away from the home? Are such centres available and accessible for all? Are the centres preparing children for formal education or are these centres promoting children’s socialisation, well-being and overall development? How formal and rigid are the curricular frameworks and pedagogies which are adopted? What are the strengths and weaknesses in the system? Are there transition policies and practices which ensure a smooth development from the informality associated with the early years to the more formal practices which take over once compulsory primary school years are reached?

- **Articles which focus on the professionalization of the work force.** Who works with young children? What training and qualifications are expected of the early years’ workforce? What does it mean to be a professional early years’ educator? What opportunities are available for continuous professional development?

Authors who are interested in contributing a paper, are initially invited to submit a 500-word abstract to valerie.sollars@um.edu.mt, copied to Dr Fathi Ihmeideh-fathi@hu.edu.jo> by 30th April 2011. Authors will be informed whether their abstract has been selected by 27th May 2011 and will be expected to submit a first full draft of their paper by 30th September 2011. All papers submitted will be evaluated using the MJES peer review process. Please consult the Journal’s information for authors: http://www.um.edu.mt/emcer/mjes.