

The Impact of National/Sub-national Culture on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

a Cross-National Comparative Case-Study of the Lived-experiences of Lebanese and Danish ECCE Educators

Background



Why Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)?

- UNESCO's EFA 1st goal is to increase global access to early learning programs
- ECCE is beneficial for the developmental and educational trajectories of young children (Hunzai, 2007).
- Participation in ECCE provides a broad range of benefits; decreased infant mortality, reduced effects of low SES, improved educational outcomes

Why Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) continued...

- WHO report: “Economists now argue on the basis of the available evidence that investment in early childhood is the most powerful investment a country can make, with returns over the lifecycle many times the size of the original investment” (Irwin, Siddiqi and Hertzman, 2007, p. 7).

What is ECCE?

- UNESCO define early childhood as the period between birth and 8 years of life.
- ECCE is rooted in the field ECD
- The work of key theorists Erik Erikson, Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky still play an influential role today.
- The early years of child development constitute the most significant developmental period of the life-cycle (Bowlby 1988; Soudee, 2009).
- To be effective ECCE programs must be high-quality

Western Modes of Early Childhood Education

- Some Western derived ECCE programs assert their universal applicability (DAP National Association for the Education of Young Children , 2009)
- There is criticism and resistance to the perceived ethnocentricity of Western ECCE programs programs (Hoffman, 2003; McMullen et al. 2005).

Western Modes of Early Childhood Education continued...

- Resistance raises questions about what forms globally orientated ECCE programs should take.
- Research supports that ECCE praxis is strongly influenced by the socio-cultural background of practitioners (Izumi-Taylor, Lee & Franceschini, 2011).
- Tazouti et al. (2010) study concluded that different models of ECCE can give rise to comparable educational outcomes

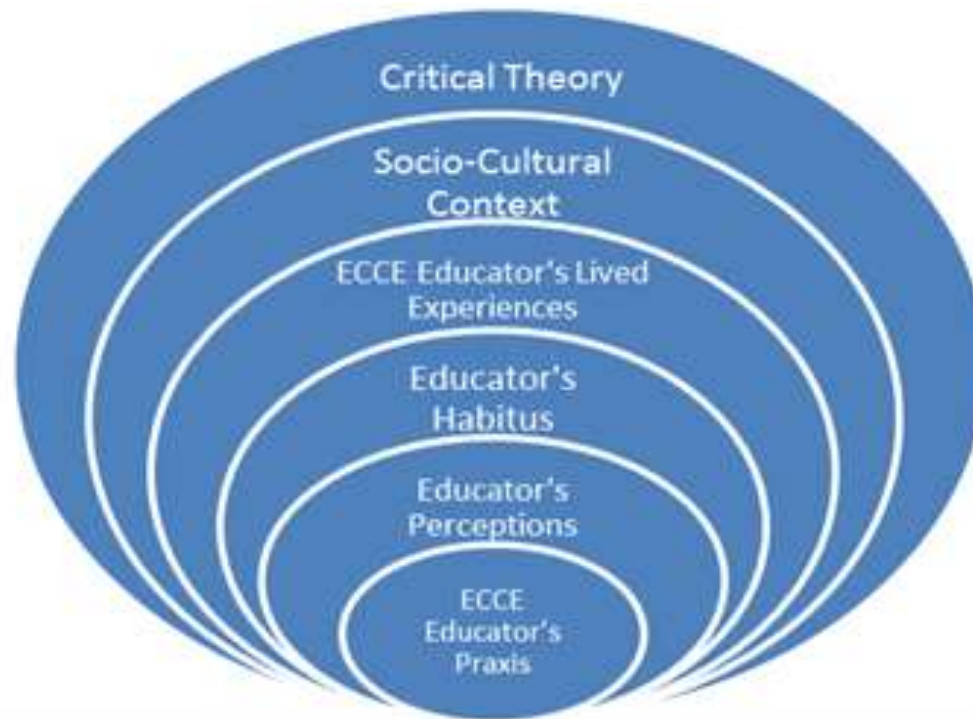
Overview of Methodology



Theoretical Framework

- Critical Theory framework:
 - Michel Foucault (1972, 1977); Pierre Bourdieu (1988, 1994).
- *“As soon as one questions that unity [discourse], it loses its self-evidence; it indicates itself, constructs itself, only on the basis of a complex field of discourse” (Foucault, 1972, p.23)*
- Habitus functions as a synthesis of the individual’s lived-experiences, giving rise to “an affinity of style” (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 8)

Conceptual Framework



Research Questions

- What are the professional lived-experiences and habitus of two Danish and two Lebanese educators?
 - How are these ECCE educators' lived-experiences and habitus similar to and different from each other?
- What are the ECCE educators' perceptions of ECD and ECCE and what are their praxes?
 - How do the educators' habitus influence their perceptions?
 - How are the ECCE educators' perceptions of ECD and ECCE similar to and different from each other?
 - How do these perceptions influence individual praxis?

Methodology

- Qualitative Research design
- Cross-national comparative case-study (Stake, 1995*).
- Embedded multiple-case design (Yin, 2013).
- Phenomenological interviews (Seidman, 2006).

Methodology continued...

- Structured/unstructured observations (Merriam, 2009).
- Document Analysis (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).
- Thematic analysis using a priori and emerging themes (Aronson, 1996).
- Triangulation of data (Merriam).

Research sites



- *Sites were purposefully selected using a priori criteria*
- Lebanese site: private school, utilizes American and British made curricula materials and standards aligned with national curriculum.
 - The Lebanese learning materials are formalized as class and work books, uniform across the different grade levels.
- Danish site, partially autonomous (selvejende) ECCE institution. Follows nationally mandated organizational themes, but ECCE educators have freedom of method.
 - All formal content transmitted child's spontaneous interactions with the ECCE educators.

Data, Analysis and Implications



Cross-national Comparison

- **Child-Educator Ratios:** all participants believe that child-educator ratios are of central importance to ECCE.
- **Child-Centered Praxis and Differentiated Learning:** all participants believe in differentiating praxis based upon individual need.

Cross-national Comparison continued...

- **The Role of the Parents:** parents play an important but complicated role in ECCE.
- **A Love of ECCE:** All participants felt an immediate and strong connection to the field of ECCE, which has not waned.
- **Importance of Response of Children:** the participants all judge the quality of their praxis based upon the responses of children in the classroom.

Cross-national Contrast

- **Curriculum and Learning Materials:** The Lebanese and Danish educators used curricula materials in different ways.
- **Gender and Professional Identity in ECCE:** Lebanese participants consider ECCE to be an extension of motherhood, Danish practitioners seem to have professional distance from praxis.

Interpretations

- **ECCE; Many Approaches, One Positive Outcome:** ECD is flexible enough to allow for multiple different interpretations of ECCE to be effectively utilized.
- **High-quality ECCE; a Plurality of Approaches:** Criteria for high-quality ECCE can be interpreted in a range of ways
- **Against Universal ECCE Standards and Curriculum:** ECCE programs should meet specific needs of national/subnational context.

Hybrid Models of ECCE

- ECCE is highly adaptable, and can be beneficial in a number of different forms.
- There is criticism of the applicability of Western models of ECCE in non-Western settings
- Hybrid models of ECCE allow programs to be tailored to meet national/sub-national requirements and include culturally valued content.
- International organizations can utilize ECCE quality criteria in a flexible manner to help ensure high-quality ECCE globally.

Conclusions

- No single correct interpretation of ECCE
- ECD is adaptive enough for a multitude of differing models of ECCE to be effectively employed
- Hybrid models of ECCE are less ethnocentric than Western derived models*
- All social systems constantly change and educational systems must change with them
- Quality indicators for ECCE can be interpreted in many different ways while still achieving positive outcomes associated with ECCE