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Part I
Real and Inconvenient Truths
Real Truths

**Advances in Science**
- From neuroscience, growing awareness of the importance of the earliest years of life.
- From economics and evaluation sciences, growing knowledge about what interventions are most effective and cost-effective.

**Advances in Policy**
- United Nations SDG 4.2
- Unprecedented increases in provision internationally and domestically
- Expansion of pre-kindergarten

**Advances in Practice**
- More focus on quality
- More focus on equity
- More focus on workforce issues
- More rhetoric on systems
A Trilogy of Inconvenient Truths

Inconvenient Facts

Inconvenient Presumptions

Inconvenient Context
**Inconvenient Facts: Investment**

Expenditure on pre-primary education as a % of government expenditure on education

![Bar chart showing expenditure on pre-primary education as a % of government expenditure on education for various countries.](chart.png)

Inconvenient Facts: Quality

Presence of well-defined quality* guidelines to cover basic ECEC needs

* Quality is assessed according to: student-teacher ratio, average teacher wages, curriculum guidelines, teacher training, health and safety guidelines, date collection mechanisms, linkages, and parental involvement

Availability of preschool for families in countries around the world

Inconvenient Presumptions

- We presume it is the government’s responsibility to fully fund ECEC, **KNOWING** in our hearts and heads that government alone will never be able to fund to the levels of quality and equity we need.

- We presume that evaluation results should contour policy, **KNOWING** in our hearts and heads that they don’t effectively measure what really matters and what we value in ECEC.

- We consistently lament that early childhood is not yet a profession, **KNOWING** that we base our quests for more compensation on professionalism.
Inconvenient Context

• **Under the “truth” of democracy**, a partisan system of governance reigns.

• **Under the “truth” of freedom and justice**, slavery, Jim Crow, racism, sexism, and a host of other “isms” persist.

• **Under the “truth” of loving children and honoring families**, the USA fails miserably.
From Inconvenient Truths to the Study

- Inconvenient Facts
- Inconvenient Presumptions
- Inconvenient Context
Part II
Study Goals and Methods
Addressing the Inconvenient Truths

1. Learn from Best Countries and Best Scholars
2. Create a Rigorous Quality Study
3. Produce Useful Products for Diverse Audiences
Goal 1: Learn from Best Countries and Best Scholars

- Sought countries for academic excellence, geographical/cultural diversity, and ingenuity in ECEC systems
- Two data sets: (i) PISA, (ii) Economist Intelligence Unit Report

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Goal 1: Learn from Best Countries and Best Scholars
Goal 2: Create a Rigorous Quality Study

**Clear Design**
- Rich research questions:
  - **What’s**: What ECEC policies and frameworks are in place?
  - **How’s**: How is ECEC system effectiveness similar or different?
  - **Why’s**: Why do countries vary in their commitments to ECEC?
- Thorough document reviews

**Grounded in Theory**
- Systems framework
- Theory of change
- Diverse outcomes

**Solid Data and Analysis**
- Common and piloted protocol
- Common informant types
- Validated analysis process
Goal 3: Produce Useful Products for Diverse Audiences
Part III
Framing Findings
Framing Findings

The Importance of Context

The Importance of Multiple Bests

The Importance of Synergies
Part IV
Finding 1: The Importance of Context
Finding 1: The Importance of Context

**Nordic Approach**
- Heavy public funding
- Heavy public provision
- Local program monitoring
- No formal child outcome data collection

**Asian Approach**
- Moderate to heavy public funding
- Mixed public-private provision
- Moderate to heavy program monitoring
- Limited national formal child monitoring

**Anglo Approach**
- Limited to heavy public funding
- Mixed public-private provision
- Heavy formal program monitoring
- Moderate to heavy national formal child monitoring
Examples of Finding 1: Context Contours How Things Are Done

**Practical Examples**

**Finland**
- Trust in government, teachers
- Universalism and community ethos

**Singapore**
- Spirit of Innovation

**Australia**
- Diversity (Indigenous & immigrant pops.)
- Egalitarianism and social justice

**Indicators**

- Limited monitoring/ accountability
- Wide array of public services
- Policy borrowing
- Rapid service expansion and inventive pilot programs
- Respect for Indigenous culture and diversity throughout Framework
**Action 1: Honor the Context**

Our policy strategy is to pilot and replicate what works, though we face huge replicability and scalability issues.

*Context matters and should contour policy and practice*
Part V
Finding 2: The Importance of Multiple Bests
Finding 2: Multiple Bests-Comprehensive Direct Services

**Pre-Perinatal**
- All have paid family leave, with many having specific fathers’ leave
- All have some form of subsidized health care, beginning at pregnancy onset
- All have some type of home visiting service

**Infants and Toddlers**
- Most have subsidies for low-income/at-risk families
- Most have supports for some form of ongoing parenting support

**Preschoolers**
- All have services for children in the year preceding formal school entry
- Most have supports for those working with young children

**Transitions**
- All have some form of transitions
- Often left to the local level, with growing national government interest
Examples of Finding 2: Multiple Bests-Different Approaches to Infrastructure

- **Hong Kong**
  - Demand-side funding
  - Nuri Curriculum promotes quality and continuity

- **South Korea**
  - Responsive policymaking
  - Robust supply-side funding scheme

- **England**
  - Comprehensive data collection system

- **Finland**
  - Comprehensive funding across age groups

- **Singapore**
  - Consolidated governance in ECEC-focused department
  - Elaborate career ladder with multiple pathways

- **Australia**
  - Engagement with families and Indigenous communities
  - NQF: durable quality framework
Action 2: Plan for Multiple Bests

We advance the one program or policy fad of the moment, often ignoring needy populations and leaving huge unserved pockets.

We must pursue multiple bests and multiple services.
Part VI
Finding 3: The Importance of Synergy
Finding 3: The Importance of Synergy - Pillars and Building Blocks
### Pillar I: Strong Policy Foundations

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<td>Continuity</td>
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I. Strong Policy Foundations

Supportive, Stable, and Adaptive Contexts
- Ideological and fiscal support for ECEC from government leaders and the public
- Durable governmental structures and capable ministry staff

Transcendent Policies That Are Consistently Applied
- Policies/framing documents exist across ministries/departments, sectors, and setting types

Engaged Stakeholders, Constituents, and Public
- Deliberate mechanisms for policy adaptation and responsiveness
- Structural mechanisms for regular constituent engagement
Pillar II: Comprehensive Services, Funding, and Governance

I. Context
   - Comprehensive Services, Funding, Governance
   - Diverse Array of Comprehensive Early Development Services

II. Policies
   - Sufficient Funding for Baseline Services and Target Populations
   - Coordinating Mechanisms and Governance

III. Workforce
IV. Pedagogy
V. Child Data

III. Leadership
IV. Individualization
V. Program Data

III. Families
IV. Continuity
V. Research
Supportive, Stable, and Adaptive Contexts

Transcendent Policies That Are Consistently Applied

Engaged Stakeholders, Constituents, and Public

Diverse Array of Comprehensive Early Development Services

• Distinguish between Comprehensive Early Development (CED) and Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)
• Provide diverse options for both

Sufficient Funding for Baseline Services and Target Populations

• Hybridize public and private sector funding strategies
• Adopt progressive universalism; work to fund for all with extra for those in need

Coordinating Mechanisms and Governance

• Coordinate ECEC system governance by creating structural entities and/or functional mechanisms
Pillar III: Knowledgeable and Supported Teachers and Families

- Knowledgeable and Supported Teachers and Families
  - Well-Prepared, Compensated, and Respected Workforce
  - Effective Pedagogical, Administrative, and Policy Leadership
  - Engaged and Knowledgeable Families

- Policies
- Funding
- Governance
- Services
- Context

- Pedagogy
- Individualization
- Continuity
- Program Data
- Research
- Child Data
III. Knowledgeable and Supported Teachers and Families

Well-Prepared, Compensated, and Respected Workforce

- Establish common professional titles that are accompanied by uniform job descriptions and entry requirements
- Create common entry, educational, and licensure requirements
- Deploy staff inventively, altering ratios based on ages and teacher qualifications
- Create competencies linked to frameworks

Effective Pedagogical, Administrative, and Policy Leadership

- Focus on both pre- and in-service PD, to promote paths for advancement

Engaged and Knowledgeable Families

- Honor the diversity of families
- Provide for family engagement in numerous ways
Pillar IV: Informed, Individualized, and Continuous Pedagogy

I  Context
II  Policies
III  Engagement
IV  Services
V  Governance

Pillars:
I  Context
II  Policies
III  Engagement
IV  Services
V  Governance

- Informed, Individualized, and Continuous Pedagogy
- Clear Articulation and Implementation of Child-Centered Pedagogy
- Individualization for All Children
- Continuity in Children’s Experiences
- Research
- Child Data
- Program Data
IV. Informed, Individualized, and Continuous Pedagogy

- **Clear Articulation and Implementation of Child-Centered Pedagogy**
  - Embrace child-centered, play-based, holistic pedagogies
  - Use curriculum frameworks as catalysts for national ECEC reform

- **Individualization for All Children**
  - Realize the essentiality of family and home culture to children’s development
  - Empower teachers to make curriculum adaptations based on students’ needs

- **Continuity in Children’s Experiences**
  - Use transition activities to ease children’s movement into primary
  - Focus on alignment of policies, programs, and pedagogies across the ECEC system and beyond
Pillar V: Data to Drive Improvement

I
Context
Policies
Engagement

II
Services
Funding
Governance

III
Workforce
Leadership
Families

IV
Pedagogy
Individualization
Continuity

Data to Drive Improvement
Effective Production and Use of Child Data
Effective Monitoring System That Collects and Uses Program Data
Effective Production and Use of Research
V. Data to Drive Improvement

Effective Production and Use of Child Data
- Carefully consider the advantages of collecting child learning data
- Use collected data to improve policies and programs

Effective Monitoring System That Collects and Uses Program Data
- Consider aligning program monitoring standards with a national curriculum framework
- Publicize the results to help parents make informed ECEC decisions

Effective Production and Use of Research
- Establish a dedicated research infrastructure built on sufficient funding and well-trained personnel
- Prioritize the translation of research into policy
The Importance of Synergy - Pillars and Building Blocks

- Strong Policy Foundations
- Comprehensive Services, Funding, Governance
- Knowledgeable and Supported Teachers and Families
- Informed, Individualized, and Continuous Pedagogy
- Data to Drive Improvement

- Context
- Services
- Workforce
- Pedagogy
- Child Data

- Policies
- Funding
- Leadership
- Individualization
- Program Data

- Engagement
- Governance
- Families
- Continuity
- Research
**Action 3: Strategize for Synergy**

We work in parallel policy lanes, giving voice without force to linkages and continuity.

We must strategize for synergies among elements of the whole system.
Part VII

From Truths to Social Change
Richmond Trilogy for Social Change

- Knowledge Base
- Public Will
- Social Strategy
Focusing on Social Strategy

Acknowledge Inconvenient Truths

Draw Lessons From Around the Globe

Act Anew: Social Strategies
Acting Anew: Global Lessons

• Lesson 1:
  • Study countries are all doing well.

• Lesson 2:
  • Study countries are all doing well, differently.

• Lesson 3:
  • Study countries face common challenges.
Acting Anew: Study Contributions

- From The Early Advantage, we see it is possible to:
  - Un-muddy essential definitions
    - ECEC and CED
  - Broaden the vision of outputs
    - Quality, equity, sustainability, efficiency
  - Place new emphasis on systems
    - Address both direct services and the operational infrastructure
  - Accord respect to what matters
    - Honor people, time, structures, cultures, and contexts
Acting Anew – Specific Strategies for Tomorrow

CONTEXT
Inventive revenue generation & distribution

SYNERGIES
Be inventive about workforce preparation, compensation, & deployment

SYNERGIES
Data for quality improvement

MULTIPLE BESTS
Consider governance essential

SYNERGIES
National framework with state variation
Acting Anew – Specific Strategies for Tomorrow

CONTEXT

Revenue Approaches Fit Economic Structures

- Diverse revenue generation and distribution approaches
- US is entrepreneurial and market-driven, so we need to think about public and private sector fiscal linkages
- Research and incentivize inventive approaches to financing that use all sectors well
Acting Anew – Specific Strategies for Tomorrow

MULTIPLE BESTS
Diverse Approaches to Alignment

**Structural Alignment:**
- Saw governance bodies that had authority, accountability, and durability (e.g., Singapore)
- No confusion with coordinating bodies

**Functional Alignment**
- Frameworks, standards, regulations, curriculum, professional development, common competencies that transcend program delivery schemes
Acting Anew – Specific Strategies for Tomorrow

SYNERGIES
Data for quality improvement

- Build comprehensive data systems that collect and use data on: children, families, programs, personnel, systems
- Use data to drive improvements in diverse areas, including program quality, teacher training, and funding schemes
Acting Anew – Specific Strategies for Tomorrow

SYNERGIES

*Be more inventive about workforce preparation, compensation, & deployment*

- Develop career ladders to specify common titles and qualifications and outline pathways for progression
- Think more about competencies, and utilize them in compensation schemes
- Flexibly deploy personnel within programs
Acting Anew – Specific Strategies for Tomorrow

SYNERGIES

National frameworks drive diverse quality, equity, sustainability, and efficiency efforts

- Frameworks begin at the heart of ECEC, outlining how/what children should learn and bringing alignment across programs
- From there, expand to related systemic elements: program monitoring, financing schemes, workforce qualifications
The Real Early Advantage “Truths!”

- Acknowledge Inconvenient Truths
- Draw Lessons From Around the Globe
- Act Anew: Social Strategies
Respect Rich Context, Diverse People, Quirky Structures
The Early Advantage
Understanding Early Childhood in Context: Finland

Kristiina Kumpulainen
Playful Learning Center
Faculty of Educational Sciences
University of Helsinki
16 May 2019
Context and values

- The Finnish State commits to citizens’ universal rights to education, health, and welfare
- The system draws on a Nordic welfare model valuing universalism, community ethos and a commitment to equality
- The system results in a principled, trusting, personalized and child-centric ECEC system
- The system is challenged by recent political, economic, demographic, and cultural changes

FINN FACTS:
- A parliamentary republic
- 5.5 million people
- 89% speak Finnish
- 5.3% speak Swedish
- Other languages: Russian, Estonian, Arabic, Somali, English
- The share of GDP dedicated for ECEC is 1.3% (OECD average 10.8%)
Contextual Impacts on ECEC Services

**Pre-Perinatal**
- Free of charge health services, beginning at pregnancy onset
- Paid parental leave
- “Baby box”

**Infants and Toddlers**
- Free of charge health services
- Home care allowance or subsidized ECEC services
- Child-benefit scheme

**Preschoolers**
- Free of charge health services
- Free of charge pre-primary education
- Child-benefit scheme

**Transitions**
- Continuity in the curriculum and pedagogy
- Close collaboration between ECEC, elementary education and home
Finland is Proud of

- Commitment to equality and community ethos
- Pays quality attention to early years of life
- Trusts and invests on highly-educated ECEC teachers (a 4-year BA-degree)
- Draws on child-centered pedagogy and humanistic values
- Values diverse learning environments in and outdoors
- Cherishes childhood and children’s agency: Honors and engages children in planning their activities and programs including Individual Educational Plans and portfolios
New Learnings from Other Study Countries

The new learnings from other study countries have generated the following questions for Finland:

How to serve increasingly culturally diverse families and children?
• The nature of ECEC services
• Teacher education and professional development
• Curriculum and Pedagogy

Lessons from Australia

How to develop data driven ECEC policy in the cultural context of Finland?
Lessons from England and Australia

How to respond to the increase in private, for-profit ECEC services in the Finnish system?
Lessons from Singapore

A question for everyone: How to develop working conditions and adequate compensation for ECEC workforce?
The Early Advantage
Understanding Early Childhood in Hong Kong

Nirmala Rao
Serena HC Yang Professor in Early Childhood Development and Education
The University of Hong Kong

16 May 2019
The Country Context

• **Historical/Socio-cultural Values**
  • Fusion of Chinese cultural values and Euro-American beliefs about early learning
  • Education as the path to upward social mobility

• **Recent Trends**
  • Rising income inequality ➔ focus on equity
  • Marked increase in government funding for early childhood services
Contextual Impacts on Children’s Services

• **Historical Impacts on Children's Services**
  • Opening of child care centres as a welfare service
  • Laissez-faire attitude to early childhood services to a more hands-on approach
  • Reform of the school education system in 2000

• **Contemporary Impacts on Children’s Services**
  • Funding of kindergarten education – Free Quality Kindergarten Education Policy (2017)
  • Link between funding and kindergarten quality
Hong Kong is Proud of

• Responsive policy-making
• Comprehensive and free health services
• Sustained emphasis on quality evidenced by robust quality assurance processes and increasingly stringent benchmarks for operation of kindergartens
• Increased public funding of early childhood services
• Future-oriented early childhood policy
New Learnings from Other Study Countries

- **Australia**
  - Valuing diversity
  - Promoting equity

- **England**
  - Early Years Foundation Stage document
  - Data-informed policy

- **Finland**
  - Considerable public funding of early childhood services
  - Emphasis on the early childhood workforce

- **Republic of Korea**
  - Nuri curriculum
  - Free child care from birth to 2 years

- **Singapore**
  - Rapid implementation of policy
  - ECDA’s model of professional growth for early childhood educators
The Early Advantage
Understanding Early Childhood in England

Kathy Sylva
Professor of Educational Psychology
University of Oxford
16 May 2019
The Country Context and Values

Historical/Socio-cultural/Values
• Stable and centralized government with entwined goals of a thriving economy and social cohesion
• Since WWII, England is a welfare state with free health care for all, enhanced income support for ‘disadvantaged’ groups, and support for families that includes paid parental leave for 39 weeks, free early education and care between 2 years and Primary Year 1

Recent/Econo-political/Trends
• Population is increasing slowly, but strong financial growth has slowed.
• Bitter divide, since 2016, regarding the still unresolved decision to leave the European Union, leaving little political appetite for improving public services
• Stagnating economic growth has led to major cuts in local municipal services, including ECEC with consequences especially for workforce development and compensation
Contextual Impacts on Children’s Services

Historical Impacts on Children's Services

• England values education
  • As a means towards a skilled workforce that sustains a strong economy; with the result that investment in ECEC is seen by all political parties as investing in the first stage of a citizen’s education
  • As a means of supporting disadvantaged group and encouraging a fair and tolerant society, with the result that all children are entitled by law to a common curriculum with staff well trained in ECEC

• England values inspection
  • As a means of ensuring legal entitlements to high quality for all, with the results that a strong national inspection service publishes individual reports on schools, colleges and ECEC settings

Contemporary Impacts on Children’s Services

• Investment in young children has trebled in the last two decades
• Recent policy initiatives has aimed more at ‘child care’ than at ‘education’ in an effort to get mothers into full employment
Early Childhood Pedagogy

• The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), a legal entitlement for all children from birth to age 5 in all settings, focuses on developmental domains and play-based pedagogy that nurtures the whole child through guided play as well as free play and occasional instruction.

Comprehensive Data Collection and Its use for Improvement

• Children: Child development is monitored at 2 years (Health) and 5 years (Education).
• Programs: Ofsted, an independent, national body is responsible for quality-assurance inspections, which are guided published ‘framework’ and take place every 3-4 years, more frequently if concerns raised by parents or officials.
• Availability: Individual reports are available for parents on the internet, summary reports presented annually to Parliament, and form the basis for providing extra support to settings judged inadequate.

Universal Entitlement Through Mixed-Market Providers

• Private Sector provision (including home based) is common for young children.
• Government funds follow the child, enabling parents to select Centre or home services.
• Public sector provision includes mandatory full-time attendance in the Reception Class in primary school with a degree-holding teacher and assistant who focus on the last year of the EYFS.
New Learnings from Other Countries

**WORKFORCE**

- From Finland – we aspire to an all graduate workforce as fewer than 1/4 of current staff in the private sector have degrees. (The government sector are better trained and paid)
- From Finland – we would like to increase the status of Early Childhood Educators, including higher pay and better conditions
- From Singapore – we seek new models for strengthening professional development, especially in the private and charitable sectors

**ENHANCED PROVISION**

- From Australia – we want to enhance our provision for children from non-dominant cultures