Curriculum and Quality Analysis and Impact Review
of European Early Childhood Education and Care

CARE Project:
Good Practices in European ECEC

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# Multiple Case Study: objectives

- Identify common and culturally different key-elements of curricula, pedagogical approaches, process quality and educational dialogues

- Synthesize the findings into a culturally sensitive European curriculum and quality assessment framework to inform practice, teacher education and policy

General approach

- Identify "good practices" across 7 countries -> variation in ECEC systems, welfare regimes, pedagogy, and structural quality
  - 4 centers per country (0-3 and 3-6 yrs) selection based on the opinion of local experts -> 28 centers
    - 4 activities per center collected in two days

- Multi-method approach:
  - Video data: classroom level and child level observations
  - Teacher reports: structural characteristics, curriculum and environmental quality (ECERS-R/E)

# Classroom quality (based on the CLASS)

- Overall high on *Emotional* and *Behavioral Support* and *Classroom Organization*
- Lower on *Educational/Instructional Support* -> related to type of activities

N=14 Toddler classrooms

N=14 Pre-K classrooms
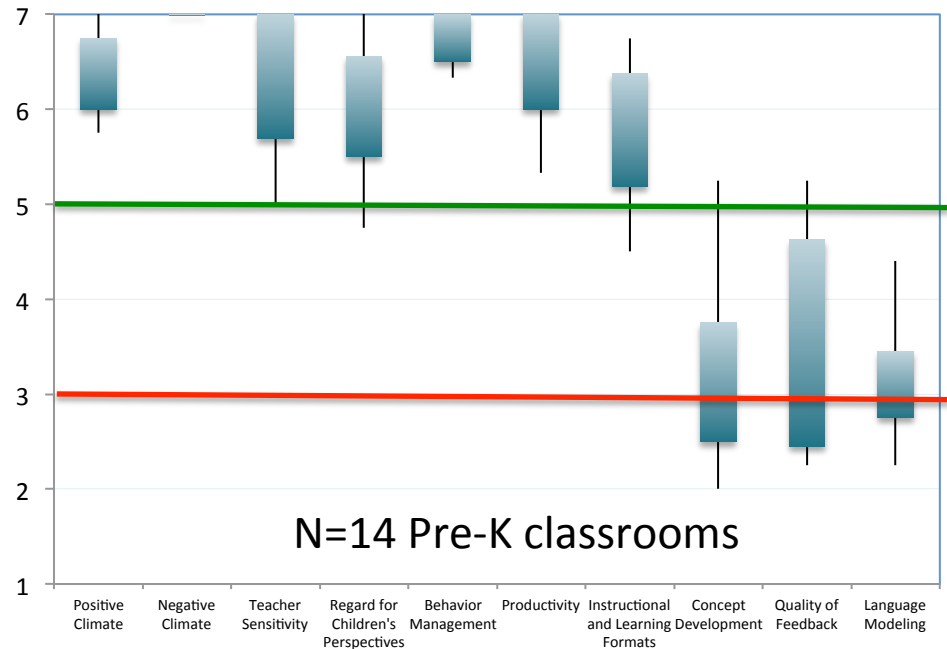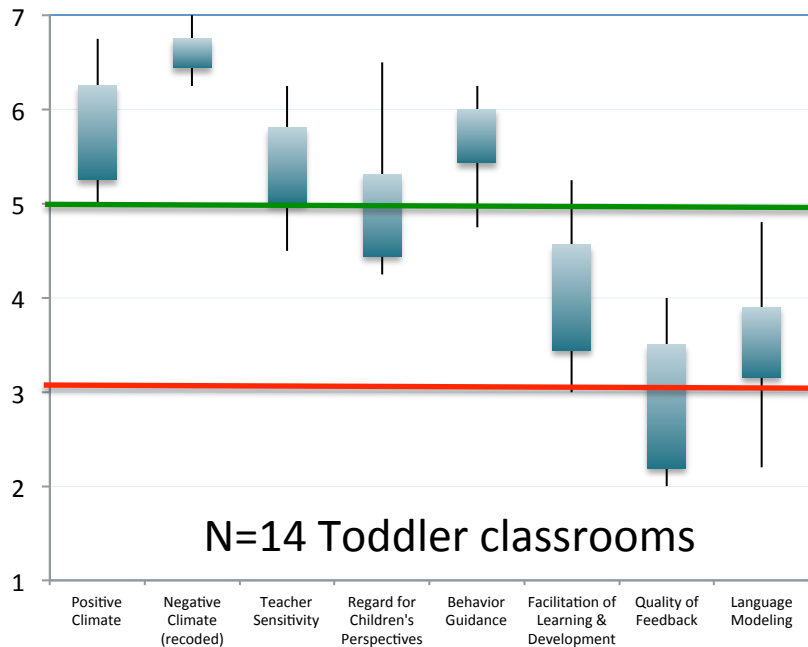
Inter-observer agreement **Toddler 97%**, **ICC=.81** and **Pre-K 94%, ICC=.69**

Variation depending on activity settings

- Most variation in quality in educational dimensions and Regard for child perspectives across activities

- Highest quality scores for educational dimensions in educational/pre-academic activities, lowest during mealtime (except LM for pre-K)

Toddler classrooms

Pre-K classrooms
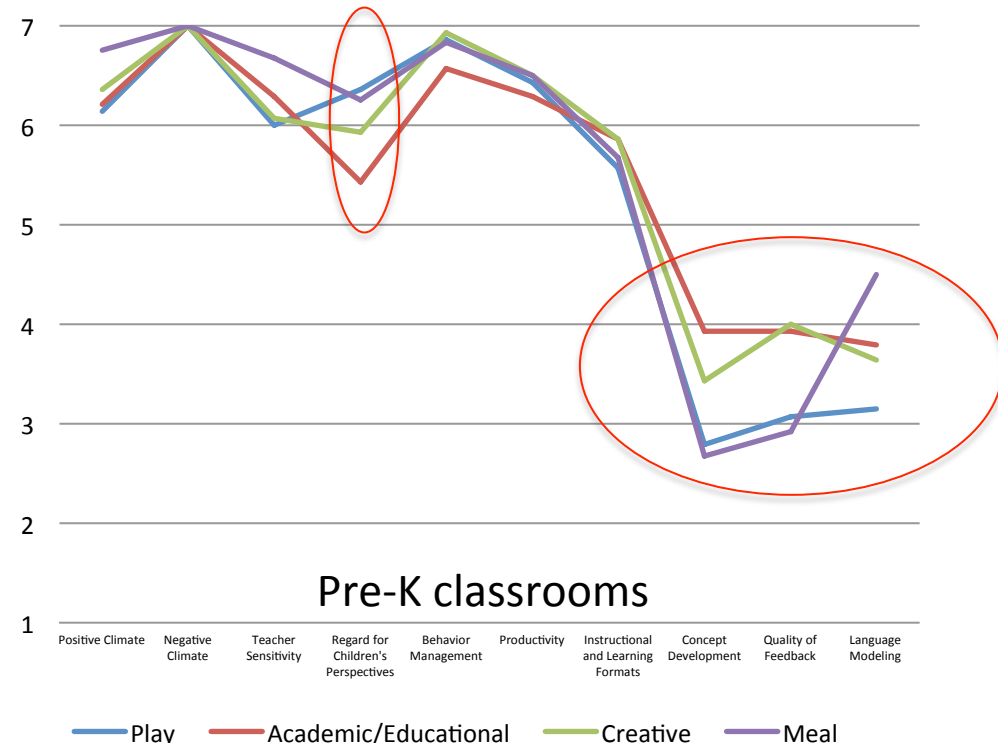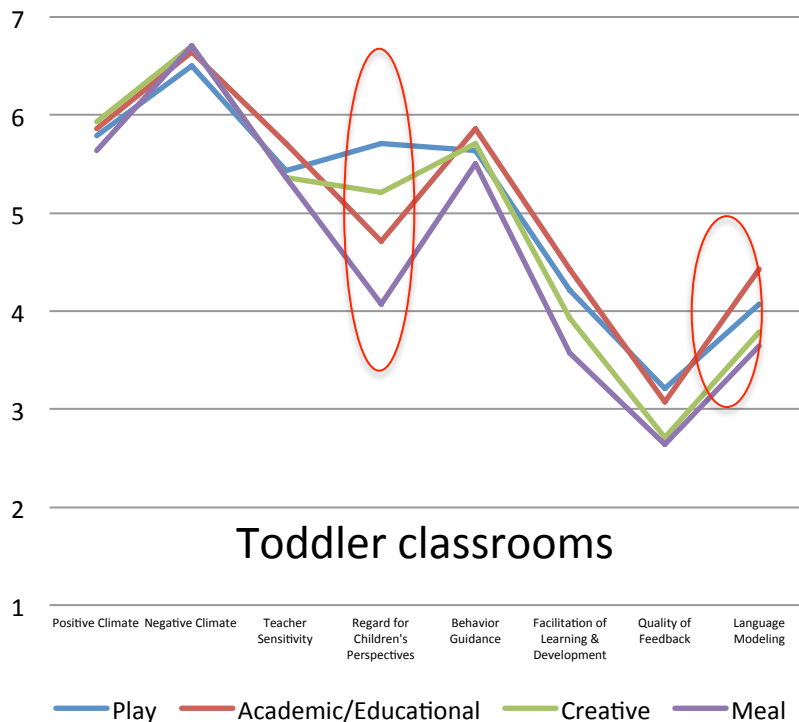
Activities and learning formats in pre-k

- Academic/educational activities:
  – Whole group vs small group activities
  – Instructional support slightly higher in small group

- Role of the teacher during play
  – Guided play with children (n = 8),
  – monitoring role (n = 2),
  – not present at all (n = 4)

Academics during circle time
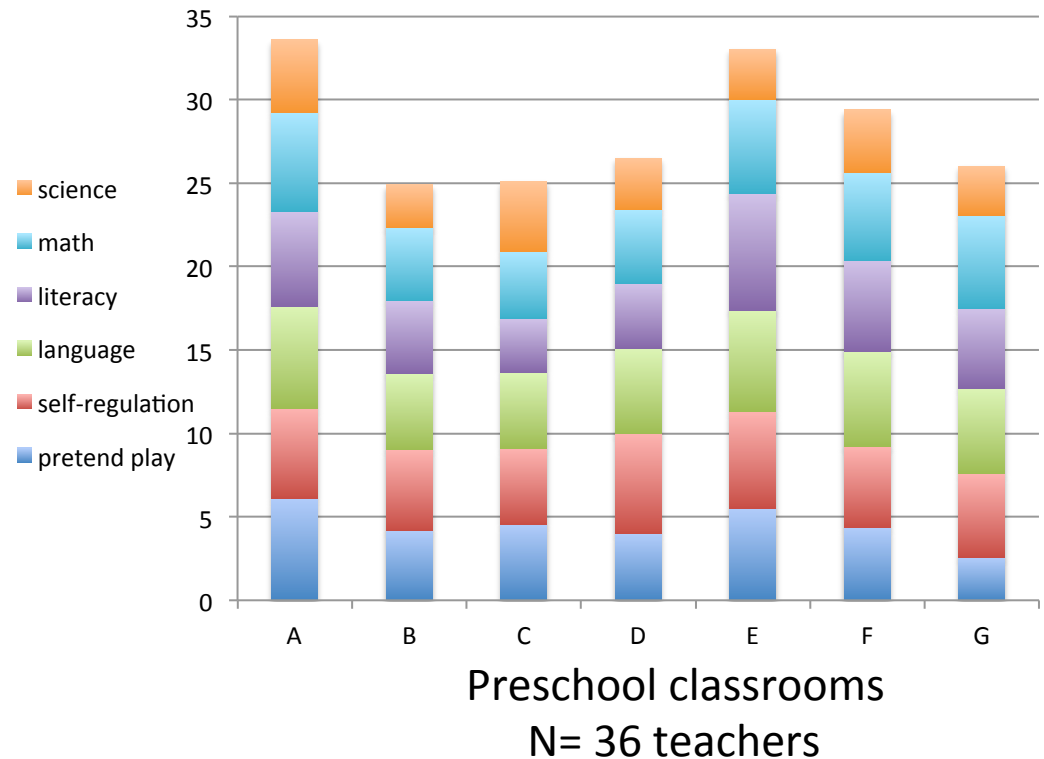
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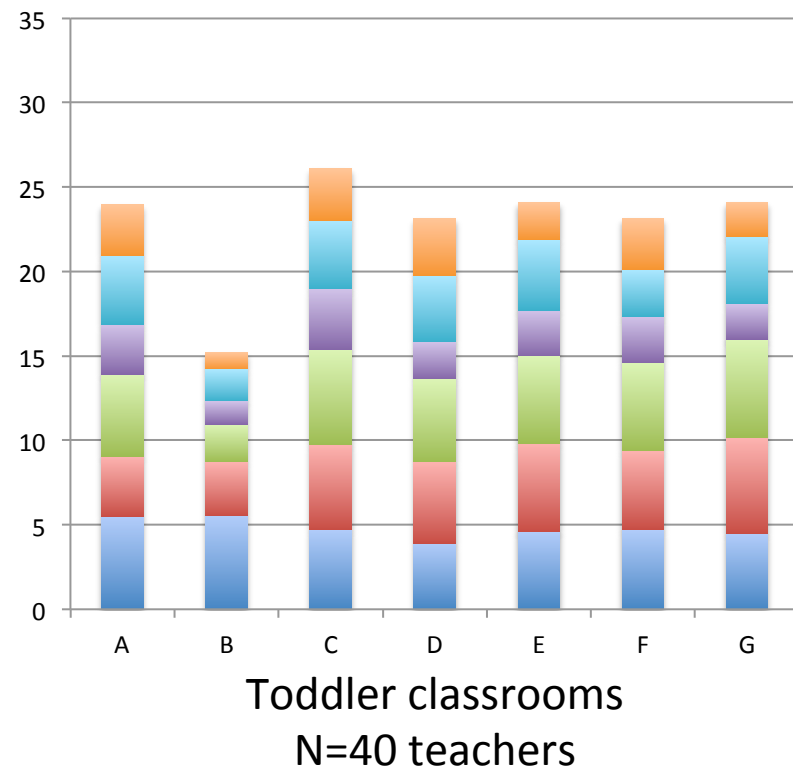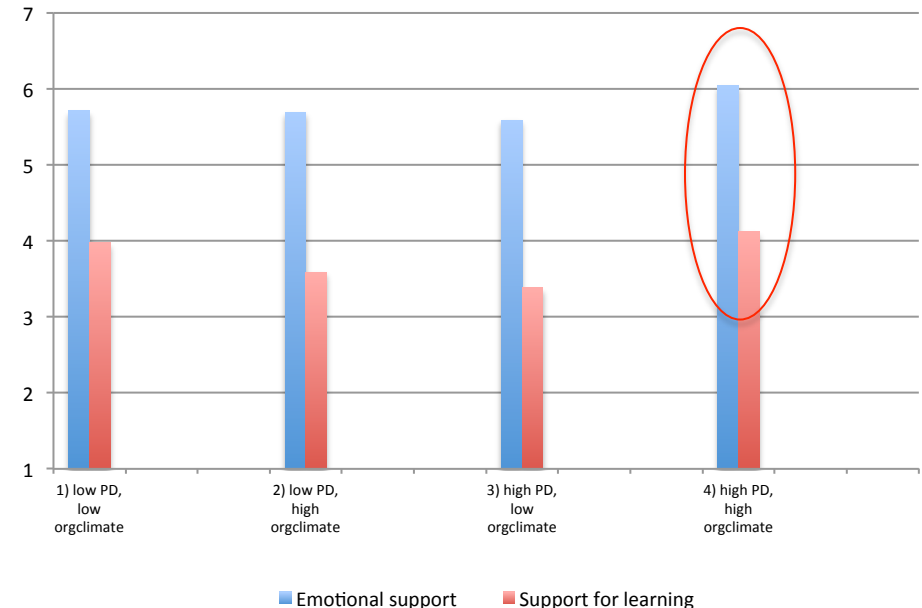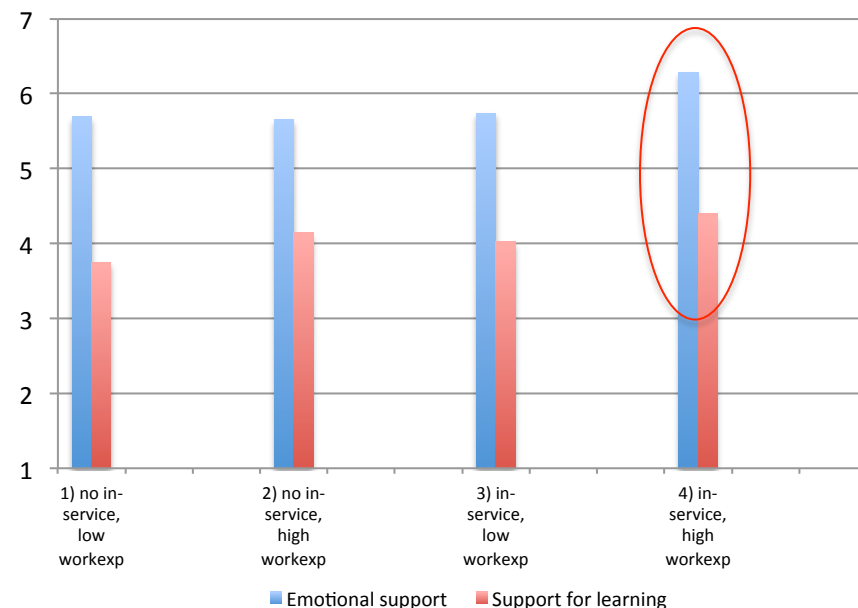Academics outdoor

Guided free play

Teacher reported provision of activities (curriculum): proportion of time spent

- 0-3 yrs: focus on play, language and self-regulation and for 3-6 yrs: more pre-academic activities
- Variation between countries

Toddler classrooms
N=40 teachers

Preschool classrooms
N= 36 teachers

Legend: science, math, literacy, language, self-regulation, pretend play

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Structural characteristics and process quality in toddler classrooms

- Role of work experience and in-service training
- Role of professional development and overall organizational climate in the center

Left chart x-axis categories: 1) no in-service, low workexp; 2) no in-service, high workexp; 3) in-service, low workexp; 4) in-service, high workexp. Legend: Emotional support, Support for learning.

Right chart x-axis categories: 1) low PD, low orgclimate; 2) low PD, high orgclimate; 3) high PD, low orgclimate; 4) high PD, high orgclimate. Legend: Emotional support, Support for learning.

Structural characteristics and process quality in toddler classrooms

- Role of group size and children-to-staff ratio -> small group activities
- Role of implemented curriculum -> importance of balance in provision of activities
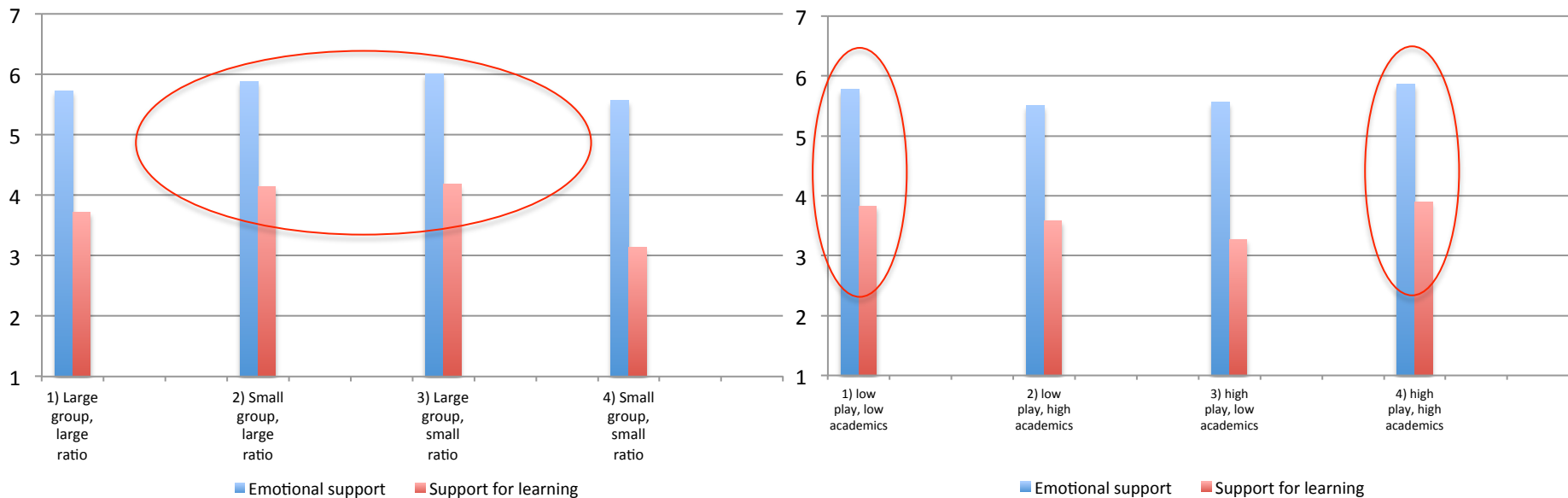
Conclusions

- Emotional quality in high range, educational quality in mid range -> good practices

- Process quality dependent on
  - Type of activity: Educational activities vs Play
  - Group setting: small group vs whole group

- Differences in curriculum:
  - More pre-academic activities for preschoolers
  - Variation in patterns across countries with differences in emphasis

Conclusions and Implications

- *Combination* of characteristics rather than single aspects that matter in view of process quality
  - In-service training and professional development
  - Group size and ratio

    -> balancing small group and whole group activites during the day
  - **Balance** in curriculum focusing on play, self-regulation and pre-academic activities

Conclusions and Implications

- **European** view on ECEC quality
  - Importance of a warm, positive classroom with sensitive teachers adopting a child-centered approach who can support children's learning (reflected in standardized observation tools)
  - Belonging to a group and being part of a community, the possibility to establish and develop peer relations, and a focus on broad developmental goals by striking a balance between 'soft' and 'hard' skills (not fully captured by standardized tools yet)

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Thank you!

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