Policy Review of Preschool Education in Uzbekistan
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Overview and Summary

This policy report reviews maps existing program/policy documents on preschool in Uzbekistan and offers an analysis of identified gaps and key findings. It provides concrete and relevant recommendations for discussion, with a particular emphasis on early education and school readiness. It sets Uzbek policy within a wider international context of preschool development. It reviews a number of international policy initiatives, and makes comparisons with policy work that has been undertaken within European Union/Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (EU/OECD) countries – including some Eastern European countries who previously followed a Soviet model. The report was written to widen discussion and to offer new perspectives about policy directions on early childhood in Uzbekistan.

In order to test out the ideas and assumptions which have informed this report, UNICEF commissioned a comprehensive review of policy documents and statistical data on preschool by an internal consultant. These documents have been translated and/or summarized for the external consultant. The external consultant then visited Tashkent and extensive discussions took place between the internal and external consultants about the detailed application of the policies, and about the interpretation of the statistics supplied. During the visit, the external consultant held discussions with officials from MoPE, Ministry of Finance, and private sector representatives, and within UNICEF. She also undertook a visit to a newly renovated kindergarten outside of Tashkent, accompanied by the MoPE official responsible for overseeing the World Bank Global Partnership for Education grant implementation.

As well as summarizing internal materials, this policy report refers to various international approaches to policy for early childhood, and the contributions they have made. It uses a policy model drawn from recent EU/OECD policy work as a basis of analysis. This approach, although mainly developed through work in high income countries, has the advantage of long continuity of policy making; a comprehensiveness of approach incorporating many different understandings and practices in policy and provision; it relies on rigorous, accessible and transparent data; and it draws on a substantial tradition of participation in policy making, and as a result is able to continuously update its policy making.

The report considers Uzbek policy in detail in relation to 11 key areas of provision highlighted in recent EU/OECD policy documents. A summary of Uzbek documents was prepared and matched against the EU model.

The findings were that there is a detailed policy framework for preschool within Uzbekistan, and there are clear stated wishes to expand the system to enable more children to attend. However, the current policy framework could be expanded in a number of key areas.

1. Lack of an Overall Policy Directive:
2. Inadequate understanding and definitions of quality
3. A paucity of monitoring, evaluation and research

A draft of the policy document was presented at a workshop for a wide range of participants held in Tashkent 26/27th April. The outcome of the meeting was that participants agreed priorities for future development:
- The development of a key, central policy document, specifying the aims and objectives of the service
- A policy on routes for access for all children, with costings, as part of the main policy document
- A comprehensive staffing and training review, with costings, to underpin the policy document
- A thorough review of evaluation, monitoring and assessment, to provide a new, comprehensive and open database, and to include a consideration of the need for attestation, inspection and testing.
Section 1: Introduction: Uzbek Policy

It is a truism that all policy making is shaped as much by tradition as by logic, and this is no less true of public childcare and pre-school organizations.

Present day tendencies in the development of pre-school organizations have their roots in different national traditions, themselves having their origins in different eras of social and economic development. These traditions have been crystallised in different institutions, in socially and legally structured ways of doing things which tend to facilitate the introduction of some innovations, and to stand in the way of others.1

This notion of “path dependency” as it is called, is especially relevant for Uzbekistan. It has a long and sophisticated history of preschool provision. The system of pre-school education, its aims and its institutions were originally developed in the Soviet era, in order to provide for working men and women, and their young children, the new citizens of the state2. In Uzbekistan, the aims of the service, and the institutions in which they were embedded, have been much elaborated since transition, and there is body of legislation, of policy guidelines and directives, which have enforced a particular view of preschool services. These can be broadly summarized in the following ways:

• A general all-round view of preschool education as nurturant-educational; to ensure children’s health, to make sure their personality development is sound, to develop their cognitive faculties, and to introduce them to national culture and universal values.

• A view that full-time kindergarten, with facilities for eating and sleeping and exercise, and medical surveillance, is (or until very recently has been) the paramount model.

• A view that the system must be very tightly regulated in every detail, and strict compliance to the regulations is the only way to ensure that standards will be met.

• A view that the kindergarten system is an integral part of the educational framework, and deeply embedded within it. Many of the mechanisms and procedures for maintaining the kindergarten system, for example inspections, are general to the education system as a whole, rather than specific for preschool education.

The policy directions and guidelines are clear and unambiguous. However, the overwhelming gap in this policy framework is that most children are not covered by it. The majority of young children– around 75% - do not attend kindergarten. The 25% or so children who do attend kindergarten mostly come from urban families in upper percentile income groups.

Rural children from low income families, arguably those most in need of preschool provision, have relatively little access. Yet even so, kindergartens are underused.3 Most kindergartens, apart from a few prestigious urban kindergartens, have some vacancies, although this situation is now partly being addressed through the school renovation programme being undertaken by the Government.

The take-up of places must raise questions about the appropriateness, desirability and cost of what is on offer, and about parents’ decisions about whether or not to engage with kindergarten. Quality, as well as quantity, is a key issue. In many European countries, there is over 95% take-up of places for 3-4 year olds, and nearly 100% for 5-6 year olds 4, irrespective of family circumstances. In these cases, parents


2 The extent of underuse and the reasons for it are not fully understood, but the World Bank Review includes data from 2012; this states that “The current number of available seats in pre-schools exceeds enrollment levels by 25 percent. For the last 10 years, this surplus has been constant and has even reached a peak of 29 percent, even though the government closed 14 percent of all pre-schools in 2009 in an attempt to control costs.”(p14) The MOPE officer responsible for the Global Education programme confirmed these findings about uptake in an informal conversation, and suggested that more work was being done on parental views of kindergarten provision.

3 Universal primary school starts at age 5-6 in most European countries, and at age 4-5 in a few of them.
value what is on offer in the public sector, and consider it as a positive benefit for their children. In Uzbekistan there is some indication from work already undertaken that parents value preschool highly, have some notion of its benefits, and would use it more often if they did not perceive obstacles in the way. But parents may also misjudge what preschool has to offer. In countries where there is a very large private sector – Australia, USA and Ireland- research suggests parents may chose poor quality provision because low cost and ease of access. Yet experts may hold very serious concerns about quality of the activities and the safety of children provided by the nurseries. Quality is reliant on expert knowledge and intervention, but parents’ views are critical to the take-up of places.

Can the policy framework in Uzbekistan be reworked to more fully reflect the needs of all children and their families, and to guide new developments? The Government has of course been addressing this issue. It produced a general statement of intentions in its education plan for 2013-2017. It has an explicit aim to widen provision. It has been endorsing new forms of part-time provision. It has considered how families in need, as identified by Mahallas, can access kindergartens. The Government commitment has been to ensure pre-school facilities are ready to enrol more children, as reflected in the ESP and GPE documents. The Government of Uzbekistan, has now begun an extensive programme of kindergarten renovation, in order to restore back to full use many of the kindergartens that had suffered from lack of capital for maintenance, and were closed or part closed.

This policy review considers how the policy framework might be modified and adapted in order to facilitate these new developments still further. As an exemplar, against which to map Uzbek pre-school policy, it has used recent EU/OECD guidelines about policy making in the field of preschool education.

5 UNICEF 2015 Review of State Policy on Financing of Early Childhood Education in Uzbekistan
Policy making in early years in Uzbekistan, has been strongly government led. However international organizations have played a powerful role in shaping many preschool agendas, in health and in education, and have separately and collectively produced many influential advisory documents which have been discussed at global and regional conferences – most recently as part of the Sustainable Development Goals.

In the last few years, there has been a concentrated global focus on preschool education and making sure children are in a position to benefit fully when they begin formal schooling. This is reflected in the new UN Sustainable Development education subgoal, 4.2. *by 2030 ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.* The evidence is incontrovertible that some form of preschool education enables children to perform better at school. However, there is no simple cause and effect, and the impact of pre-school is affected by many factors, above all by household income and family poverty.

UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Bank have all now provided substantial material on policy organization for pre-school. UNICEF has developed the concepts of school readiness, and early learning development standards, and has promoted these very widely in the region. Uzbekistan has benefited from this analysis of provision, and UNICEF input into curriculum planning and in-service training.\(^1\)

UNICEF globally is now contributing to new guidelines known as MELQO\(^2\) (Measuring Early Learning Quality and Outcomes), directed at low income countries, and therefore less suitable for a middle income country with a good tradition of kindergartens such as Uzbekistan.

UNESCO, with the help of the OECD has developed a series of policy guidelines\(^3\), which have been used to provide comprehensive reviews of country level provision, including a review of Kazakhstan.\(^4\)

UNESCO has also had a series of policy briefs examining aspects of pre-school provision in depth.\(^5\) However since 2010, the briefs and reviews have been discontinued, in favour of an emphasis on peacebuilding.

The World Bank has switched from direct programme intervention to analyses of early childhood governance and structure. These reviews, known as the SABER system (Systems Approach for Better Education Results) take a systemic view of services. Each in-country review offers a comprehensive analysis of the local evidence on ECD/ECEC about levels of take-up and quality of provision. Where necessary, the World Bank researchers undertake their own research to complement official data, with an emphasis on cost-benefit analysis. The SABER review makes recommendations based on this analysis, with suggestions about implementation. It pays attention to delivery mechanisms, in particular the use of the private sector. Following on from the Education sector plan, Uzbekistan has benefited from a SABER review (2012) and the rigour of the statistics that have been obtained.

UN Women has recently issued a policy document, *Gender Equality, Child Development and Job Creation* which argues that policies for early childhood would benefit considerably with a wider perspective on the role of women, not only as mothers, but as service providers and as participants in the labour market.\(^7\) The document is partly based on analyses carried out in central Asia.

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5 A more recent review suggests these recommendations have by and large not been implemented. Habibov, N (2014) ‘Does reform in Kazakhstan improve access to childcare? Evidence from a nationally representative survey’ Children and Youth |Services Review.
The material compiled and promoted by these agencies is drawn up and issued centrally, in New York, Washington, Geneva or Paris, although drawing closely from evidence in the field. The documents tend to be generic, drawing on particular approaches to and theories of development and economics, relying heavily on sources and references from North America. This work has been extremely useful in pushing the early childhood agenda forward. However, the agendas of these agencies has shifted over time, as new global priorities emerge, for example the recent emphasis on peace education.

Section 2 (ii). The EU/OECD Policy Model for ECEC

There is another policy model, that of the EU/OECD. (Technically, the EU and OECD have had a separate series of policy approaches, but they tend to pool their data, and their policies closely overlap). Originally the policy emphasis was on early education and how it enhanced later school learning. This is still a major focus; the OECD is currently working on proposals to extend testing to five-six year olds for the PISA Programme for International Assessment, which offers a benchmark for policy makers in order to make comparisons on educational performance across countries. But there is also a policy emphasis on the reconciliation of work and domestic responsibility for both men and women (eg flexible childcare, leave arrangements etc.)

These EU/OECD approaches have certain unique advantages.

a) They represent continuous and consistent policy making over a 40 year period. The latest documents are dated 2016/2017. Since 1982, the OECD¹ and the EU² have been discussing and revising policy models for early childhood education and care (ECEC). Over that period, there has been an extensive and exhaustive series of discussion papers, international reviews, and statistical compilation on all aspects of pre-school policy, drawing on the experiences of the 35 member states of the OECD, and the overlapping membership of the 27 member states of the EU. The external consultant has worked in this field for many years, and has helped to draft some of the material³.

b) They encompass an exceptionally comprehensive policy stance. Policies reflect the variety of experiences of member states with very different histories of early education and care provision. As a result, policy takes into account a wide variety of factors that affect services; the need to combine care and education; the need to allow for family circumstances including family income in drawing up policy; extremely innovative and non-prescriptive educational curricula; the dovetailing of preschool services with primary school; support for vulnerable children; the training pay and conditions of the staff who work in services; and crucially, the cost-effectiveness of various policies.

c) The policies are based on extremely rigorous, widely accessible, and continuously updated data sets, as listed in the OECD family database, and in the Eurydice publications (see below). These include data on household income, available benefits, taxation regimes, employment opportunities for mothers, and levels and types of care and education for young children, the distribution of uptake, and expenditure patterns on services. These data sets are unique in their breadth, depth and accuracy. EU and OECD policy making is alert to the need to provide “evidence-based policy making”.

d) The policy models have been developed on a democratic and representative basis. They have grown out of and have been specifically rooted in the accumulated and systematically compared experiences and data from individual countries, and have been developed by the representatives of those countries, on a democratic basis.

e) These ideas have been continually been updated, revised and refined by policy makers from those countries working together with academics and interested parties, and they have been voted on by the relevant representative bodies. They reflect changing circumstances and policy developments throughout the countries that are covered, and in no sense represent a final or fixed version.

The member states who have contributed to these various documents and statistical data sets are mainly, but not exclusively, high income countries. They include a number of Eastern European countries that were once part of the Socialistic bloc, but which have subsequently joined the EU. Whereas many of the international documents implicitly assume a basic level of provision for young

2. European Commission Childcare Network: 1990-96 Quality in Services for Young Children; Quality Targets in Services for Young Children. EC. Brussels
children, these policy documents assume extensive high quality provision, sophisticated evaluation and monitoring processes, and the capacity for ongoing policy making. This makes it a difficult model to use in low income countries, since so many of these conditions are not in place. But for middle income countries, particularly those with a long history of kindergarten provision, such policies can be a source of inspiration, and a means of seeing long-established traditions from a new angle. The OECD/EU policy documents referred to in this document are not intended to be prescriptive, but to give an indication of the possibilities in developing quality provision for young children.

This report therefore focuses on the most recent documents available from EU/OECD.

The EU/OECD after much deliberation and discussion, have adopted a standard definition for services for children before school age, as Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). All documents referring to young children now use this terminology. It is defined in more details as:

Provision for children from birth through to primary education that is subject to a national regulatory framework, i.e., it must comply with a set of rules, minimum standards and/or undergo accreditation procedures. It includes: public, private and voluntary sectors; and centre-based as well as home-based provision (in the provider’s home).

ECEC policy refers to a specific package of policy measures which are listed below. These 11 policy measures are then summarized in a chart which gives examples of countries which have adopted these policies. The chart lists the policy areas and gives examples of countries where the policies have been realised.

An example of a country which has faced major policy shifts in ECEC policy is Germany. This example serves to reflect the many changes most countries have had to make in order to adapt to constantly changing social and economic circumstances, and in the light of new research. Germany first of all incorporated the childcare and early education system of East Germany, once a satellite state of the Soviet Union. East Germany had a comprehensive system of kindergartens, much more extensive than in West Germany, and to begin with much of the East German system was disregarded or closed down, especially provision for children under three. However, partly in response to EU pressure, German policy gradually developed to allow for the reconciliation of work and domestic responsibility, and increased numbers of women in the workforce, so that maternity and paternity leave arrangements dovetailed with childcare provision, and crèche provision was made more widely available again. Germany also reviewed its pedagogic arrangements in the light of Germany’s weak position in the PISA ratings, and in the light of other comparative international data. Most recently it is considering how to adopt policy in the light of a huge influx of refugee families. At each stage it has drawn on wide-ranging statistical data and independent research, in order to formulate policy.

The model of EU/OECD ECEC provision provided here is based on 2 recent documents which provide comparative statistical data across Europe. In addition, the OECD family database provides extensive comparative statistical data on a wide variety of provision intended to support families and children. A report to the European Parliament (2013) which predated the policy documents, Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care sets out 6 case studies, including Romania and Germany both of which had close links to ex-Soviet thinking. The reference is given below. All these reports can be downloaded.

6 http://www.oecd.org/social/family/database.htm
Section 3. Key Policy Areas for EU/OECD provision

1. Governance:
EU/OECD sees quality as essentially a systemic issue. It is less about the particular arrangements within classrooms, or about the performance of individual children, partly because there is such variation between countries about how services are delivered, and what pedagogies are most appropriate. But it is about the policy elements that need to be in place, in order to deliver a comprehensive and high quality service for young children.

A central recommendation is that countries should develop an overall policy statement specifying the aims and objectives of services for young children and rationales for providing it: (typically these include references to the need to reconcile family and work life through childcare as well as educational goals for children). This policy document may be extensive, and highly centralized, or very brief, depending on the amount of local autonomy within the system.

The policy statement usually considers the responsibility and lines of accountability in the system – who does what at the various levels of administration. Some ECEC systems are described as "split systems", that is services for children under three are administered by the health or social services sector; and services for children over three are administered by the education sector. Some ECEC systems are stand alone, that is they are independent of mainstream education, and have their own separate governance measures including policy making powers, funding, and regulatory mechanisms. The OECD has described this position as "a strong and equal partnership within the education system".

2. Access:

The EU has set a target for provision for 33% of children under three and 95% of children 3-6. Most EU countries offer a legal entitlement to places and/or set targets for access, with appropriate funding plans, and/or introduce compulsory attendance (eg 5 years upwards).

Whilst a general statement of intention is useful, it is not sufficient. Specifying access, with targets, and clear options for reaching them, through legal entitlements, funding plans, and compulsory attendance, as part of a policy initiative, is necessary to achieve the desired outcomes.

3. Affordability

Affordability is a significant barrier to accessing ECEC services. Low income must balance household needs, and for very low income parents paying for preschool services may not be an option, however valuable the learning experience. Primary and secondary education is almost always a universal and free service, as of right, so that no child will be disbarred from education. EU countries have dealt with the issue of affordability in a number of ways. Most EU countries offer free education provision for children aged 4/5 and above. Where there is childcare provision, ie for more than the designated number of hours for education, or for children younger than 4, there is usually a system of fee capping. Fees are capped at around the level of 15% of household income for full time/childcare provision, to ensure all children can access places irrespective of parental income.

4. Employment and Professionalization of Staff:

Research has consistently found that the better qualified the staff, the better the outcomes for children. Accordingly, most EU countries require that at least one member of staff, and preferably more, in a nursery or kindergarten, should be qualified at tertiary level (Bachelor level). Many countries now offer a specific early years degree course, with relevant pedagogies and topics. Care staff, ie non-teaching staff are required to have a minimum qualification at upper-secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary

1 OECD Starting Strong 11 ibid. p.57.
2 OECD Family database. PF3.1.
level; and auxiliary staff/assistants are not required to have a qualification, but mostly have a minimum qualification at upper secondary level.

Research also suggests that staff employment conditions, hours and conditions of work, and pay levels, can be regarded as a proxy for quality. The better the conditions, and the more the autonomy of staff, the better the outcomes for children.

5. In Service and Continuous Training

Professional duty means a task described as such in working regulations/contracts/ legislation or other regulations on the teaching profession. European countries usually regard continuing professional development CPD as a professional duty and/or necessary for the promotion of staff who already hold higher-level qualifications, namely ECEC teachers. In many countries, CPD is an integral part of the teacher’s role.

6. Educational Curriculum

Official guidelines are issued on a range of matters to help ECEC providers offer a high-quality service. Educational guidelines may cover learning content, objectives and attainment targets, as well as teaching approaches, learning activities and assessment methods. Approaches vary from be centrally controlled and designed curriculum, to broad, brief outlines, which are filled in at local level, by the kindergarten, with the help of the local community and parents.

7. Infrastructure and Resourcing

Capital resources for the service should reflect the aims and objectives of the service. They should include the provision of premises in good condition, with suitable inside and outside space, equipment, and provision for maintenance etc. Resources have to be determined at a national level, but there is usually some leeway, and budgetary control at institutional level.

8. Staff-Child Ratios

The limits set for the number of children per adult or per group are usually formulated taking into account children's ages. (Group size is not usually specified) As children get older and more independent, the maximum number of children allowed per staff member increases. These staff ratios refer to classroom organization and do not take account of supernumerary staff.

9. Support for Parents

Family should be fully involved in all aspects of education and care for their children. ECEC services should support the learning and care provided by families, but also enable mothers to participate in the workforce. Most European countries emphasise the importance of partnership with parents. In some cases this means offering support to parents to assist with their children's learning, and planning various events in which parents can take part - eg breakfast clubs or exercise groups. In some countries parents are regarded as an essential part of the planning process for curriculum or admissions.

10. Support for Disadvantaged Children

Specific measures to support children's development, learning and attainment especially language development; provision of additional or specialist staff, establishment of special organisational and/or funding arrangements. Often determined at an institutional level, according to need. Many countries, but not all, provide integrated provision for children with special needs, rather than separate provision, and try to ensure relevant support in situ.

11. Monitoring, Evaluation and Research

OECD/EU recommendation that 1% of the preschool budget should be spent on research and monitoring.
Accreditation is the process of assessing whether settings intending to provide ECEC comply with the regulations in force, i.e. a certain set of rules and minimum standards. External evaluation is a quality control process carried out by individuals or teams from outside an educational/care setting which seeks to evaluate and monitor the performance of ECEC settings, report on the quality of provision and suggest ways to improve practice. Accreditation and evaluation are particularly important where there is a large private sector, but less so within a standardized state sector.

Data monitoring is important for internal purposes but also for comparative purposes, and the range of data requirements are set at an OECD/EU level.

Over and above data monitoring, the OECD recommends a long term agenda for research and evaluation to support policy initiatives.\(^3\)
# Section 4: Country Examples

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<tr>
<th>EU/OECD key policy areas</th>
<th>Country examples</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>Most countries have a central/federal policy statement. Nordic countries: central policy statements very brief, autonomy at institutional/district level: Italy, policy determined at municipal level eg Reggio Emilia. Some countries have split systems: care for children under 3, education for children over 3, eg France; Netherlands; others have freestanding systems whose governance is independent of the school system, for children 0-6 eg Nordic countries, Spain, Germany.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>In 2017, most countries have now met EU targets of provision for 33% of children under 3, and 95% children 4-6, even from very low starting levels, eg Portugal 2001-2011, 25% increase. No country permits children to reach the age of 7 without some preschool experience. All EU countries were persuaded for both internal and external reasons to invest in preschool education and care, although the drivers and timetables were different across countries. ¹</td>
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<tr>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>Most countries offer free education provision from 2/3yrs, but may charge for any non-education provision, ie childcare for working parents eg UK, France, Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment and Professionalization of Staff</td>
<td>Most countries require tertiary training for senior staff – eg Denmark, 60% of all staff must have completed 4 yr tertiary degree. Most countries where staff employed as teachers, staff have negotiated pay and conditions of work. Difference in those countries with large private sectors; private sector has less stringent requirements eg UK, Ireland, Netherlands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Service or Continuous Training</td>
<td>Most countries require continuous training, but can be provided nationally or locally, by state or private providers. Difference between public and private sectors; in those countries where there is a large private sector, training more likely to be ad hoc and provided on a commercial basis eg UK, Ireland, Netherlands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Curriculum</td>
<td>All countries have an educational curriculum for children 3+, but in some countries there is considerable local discretion and autonomy in deciding content. In these countries, there is only a very broad outline curriculum – less than a page- and no early learning development standards. Nurseries can decide on their own curriculum, pace it, develop it, and evaluate it themselves, according to local needs and circumstances. All books and materials to support the curriculum are also decided upon by the institution rather than nationally. eg Nordic countries, Italy²</td>
</tr>
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¹ Eg The Reggio Emilia nurseries in Northern Italy are widely recognized as the best nurseries in the world in terms of children's output, but there is no curriculum at all, and the children's work is undertaken on a project basis, children, staff and parents deciding together what the children will work on.
Infrastructure Resourcing

Capital, maintenance and equipment budgets need to adequately reflect the aims of the service. Private sector providers must generally meet these costs directly, although where possible they pass costs onto parents. In areas where there are very high property costs eg London, Dublin, private provision tends to be substandard unless strictly regulated.

Staff-Child Ratios

Varies considerably, according to age of child, length of day, and number of assistants. Highest ratios for 3 yr olds (discounting assistants) 1:20 (Belgium, Slovakia, Lithuania) 1:25 Cyprus. Lowest rates, 1:7, Finland.

Support for Parents

Most countries recognize the importance of parental participation in their governance statements; in some countries this includes decision making powers, even on such issues as curriculum and fees eg Croatia, Slovenia, Latvia, Denmark, Norway, Italy, although this only possible where there is local autonomy.

Support for Disadvantaged Children

Most countries offer extra support for disadvantaged children within services, for instance children with special needs, or special language programmes for non-native speakers. Eg extra support staff to work with children with disabilities within settings – UK, Spain.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Research

The EU/OECD require sophisticated statistical returns at governmental level (see OECD family database/Eurydice) in order to compile comparative statistics – for instance matching provision with levels of disadvantage, monitoring take-up, etc. The EU also offers substantial funding for comparative research in ECEC. In addition, many countries support a wide range of independent academic research into aspects of their provision and training; increasingly governments demand "evidence based policy". Eg, Belgium, Netherlands, Sweden. In the UK all new initiatives required independent research monitoring for outcomes and efficacy.

A paper was provided for the workshop in which four EU countries – Germany, Finland and Romania were discussed in more detail. In addition, a review of Kazakhstan was included. Kazakhstan was heavily influenced by OECD/EU provision, and its expansion was closely monitored by OECD. It provides an interesting example of rapid policy development. The paper is included in Appendix 1.
Section 5. Uzbek Policy Mapped Against the Key EU/OECD Policy Areas

Uzbek policy includes many of the key policy areas outlined in the EU/OECD model. The chart below maps commonalities and overlaps, but also highlights gaps and inconsistencies there.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>EU/OECD Policy Area</th>
<th>Uzbek Policy Provision</th>
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| Governance          | • There is not an overall statement covering children's birth to school starting age. The existing legal basis on preschool education (PE) envisages the education for children at ages of two to seven, and considers it as the first step within the continuous education. But unlike primary education it is not compulsory or free. The principle of equal access of children to preschool education  
|                     | • is envisaged in the legislative base of the Republic of Uzbekistan, by the Law On Guarantees of the Rights of the Child (2008) but policies have yet to be enacted to support this aim. |
|                     | PE is provided by governmental and non-governmental facilities and short-stay groups. The documents that regulate this condition include the followings: the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan from 1997, the Resolution # 225 of the Cabinet of Ministers from 2007, the PE Concept of 2008 and others. The regulative basis provides clear description of terms and rules of admission into preschools and specialized preschools for certain categories of children with special needs. The kindergarten is defined as follows:  
|                     | • A pre-school institution is a nurturant-educational and recreational institution whose main tasks are:  
|                     | • Protection of children's life and improving their health  
|                     | • Forming the foundation of a child’s personality, development of a child's cognitive interests  
|                     | • Ensure intellectual, personal and physical development of the child  
|                     | • Introducing the necessary corrections of deviations in the development of the child  
|                     | • Familiarizing children with national culture and universal values  
|                     | • Preparing children for school. |
|                     | There is a highly specified national regulatory framework for kindergartens, which covers public, private and voluntary sector centre based provision. This regulatory framework has in the past hindered the development of part-time groups and other flexible provision, since all regulations have been constructed around the model of the full-time kindergarten. For example acting Resolution 225 of the Cabinet Ministers includes guidance on short stay groups which was at odds with MOPE and Ministry of Finance guidance on short stay groups, as laid out in the State programmes of 2014 and 2016., leading to confusion about implementation he responsibility and lines of accountability for kindergarten provision are not all located on one place, but distributed according to function and level of administration. |
Autonomy at the level of the kindergarten is relatively limited, and entirely governed by the many regulations in place concerning kindergarten functioning. Stakeholder representation is built into the system at the level of local government and Malhallas, but service users and service providers have relatively little say.

### Access

Primary and secondary education is universal

*“Every individual is guaranteed equal rights to education, regardless of gender, language, age, race, nationality, beliefs, religion, social origin, occupation, social status, place of residence in the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan.” (Law on Education Oliy Majlis, No 723-XII 1992)*

This does not apply to children under 7. There is no entitlement or guarantee of access for pre-school children; there is no legal entitlement; no binding targets, and no funding set aside to reach targets, although there is an expressed intention to increase provision (Education Sector Plan 2013-2017).

There is no statement concerning equal access to kindergarten services: at present there is a difference between urban and rural areas, and the biggest take-up is amongst higher quintile income groups.

Administrative procedures for access to kindergartens are specified (MOPE order no 297, 2007) but they have been recently relaxed (2016 online registration for schools).

Where kindergartens exist, places are in principle reserved for 15% of referred low income children in the kindergarten, either free or with reduced fees (Resolution 744 2008). There is no national monitoring of registration lists for poor children.

Transition of children from pre-school to primary school, or extra support programmes within schools for the children who have not attended preschool is not currently dealt with within the existing regulatory framework of MOPE.

### Affordability

Surveys by the World Bank and others have indicated that the cost of preschool for parents is a major disincentive.

Regulations on fees have been issued by the Joint Resolution of MOPE and MoF, and by Cabinet 2008/2009/2013/2016 specifying what parents must pay for (currently 60% of meal costs) and how the money collected will be handled within the kindergarten.

Part-time groups (which are available mostly for 5-6yr old children) are generally free, but the position about providing and paying for school meals is unclear.

### Employment and Professionalization of Staff

Standards and conditions of employment specified by the National Programme for Personnel Training (463-1 1997).

*“persons having appropriate teacher education, professional experience and high moral character shall have the right to engage in teaching activities.”*

Tertiary education is not usually required for preschool teaching. Order 191 MOPE 2016 requires preschool teachers to hold at least, secondary special education.
There is a classification system of professions in public education. (164/2015). The Personnel list specifies the deployment of staff within the institution. There are a relatively high number of supernumerary staff (methodologist, psychologist, defectologist, nurse, language teacher, music teacher).

There is limited local autonomy concerning employment or deployment of staff.

| **In-service or Continuous Training** | Retraining and advanced training of pedagogues is a very high priority. The National Human Resources Training Programme (2006/updated regulations 2013/2014) outlines the eligibility and conditions for such training. The training includes upgrading on any new regulations that have come into force. The training is led centrally by the National Training Centre, although training courses may be organized at regional/district level.

In service training of 144 approx hours is required every five years for teachers, and every three years for more senior staff.

UNICEF, with RMCISTT, conducted special training on child centred education, standards, and on the Bilimdon curriculum |

| **Educational Curriculum** | Curricula and programmes were updated 2013 (no 302, MOPE) and in 2016 (Bilimdon/Bolajon programme) on the basis of early learning development standards.

The Bolajon is for children attending kindergarten full-time. It is due to be revised in 2017, on the basis of monitoring child outcomes. The Bilimdon programme is for short stay groups for children aged 5-7. Both Bolajon and Bilimdon programmes are available in Uzbek, Karakalpak and Russian languages. In principle the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On the State Language” suggests that material should be available in all local languages.

There is no local discretion in curriculum planning |

| **Infrastructure** | Nationally determined standards of equipment, furniture, sanitation (Year of Healthy child no 2133/2014) Regulations on resourcing and budget administration at national, regional and district level (CabMin No139, 2009/291, 2010). These standards have lapsed because of shortfalls in financing. Ongoing World Bank/MoF infrastructure project addressing shortcomings.

Capital repairs and maintenance are key issues, because of under-capacity of kindergartens. Some requirements, eg for sleeping, may be outdated.

There is no local budgetary discretion |

| **Staff Child Ratios** | Standards specified: group size 15-20 children for 2-3 yrs; 20-25 children 3-6yrs. (CabMin225:2007)

It is not clear how supernumerary staff are deployed in relation to staff ratios |
| **Support for Parents** | Key issue because of under-utilization of kindergartens. Parents do not use kindergartens, even when places available. Preliminary survey of parental attitudes underway (personal communication MOPE)

A variety of orders concerning parents, payment of fees; and for contracts with parents, charters and boards of trustees eg CaMoPE185 2011, MoJ N2377 2012 CabMin 175, 2012, and for security and health protection 17/2, 6/3 2009.

Parents shall have the right to take an active part in organizing the life of children in the children's pre-school institution. (225:2007:26).

Emphasis on parents mainly refers to encouraging/instructing them to uphold existing school rules and traditions, rather than as co-partners. This contrasts with the notion of "parental choice", a fundamental principle in market based systems; or the notion of joint stakeholders, as in the Nordic countries or in Northern Italy. |
| **Support for Disadvantaged Children** | There are Specialists within schools eg speech therapists, to assist those children who are admitted.

Children mostly categorized according to type of disability, and provision for them is segregated. (225: 2007). There does not seem to be any monitoring of their progress, that has been incorporated into modifications of mainstream provision. Mother tongue teaching is in principle available, in Minority Language schools. but in practice, as noted above, the curricula are not translated into minority languages except Karakalpak. |
| **Monitoring, Evaluation and Research** | State Testing Centre responsible for certification of educational institutions, conducting certification of teaching and expert evaluation of standards and curricula (107/2016).

National compilation of statistics and monitoring, undertaken by MOPE and National Statistics agency, using slightly different criteria.

National monitoring of kindergarten children's development conducted twice a year, and tools are currently being developed, summarizing the progress of children who attend kindergarten on four domains of development.

No independent research or independent evaluation; Most monitoring and evaluation concerned with compliance to regulations. Although there is some online information, the findings from monitoring and evaluation, are not routinely made publicly available. |
Section 6. Discussion

All policy making is to an extent path dependent; that is, it is an expression of national traditions which are drawn from particular social and economic realities. Policies can only reflect what has gone before and have become crystallized in practice. The advantage of using a comparative model, in this case the body of work developed by the EU/OECD on early childhood care and education, is that it serves to illustrate other possibilities, to sharpen gaps, and to highlight areas where change might be useful. It is no sense intended as an alternative to what already exists. In some ways Uzbekistan is in advance of EU/OECD model, and has policies and practices – for example the use of music and performance for children, and emphasis on health and nutrition – which other countries might envy.

Whilst the mapping has highlighted many points for comparison, it is suggested from this comparative analysis, that there is a need to focuses on three closely linked areas of policy weakness:

1. **Lack of an Overall Policy Directive:**

There is no central policy statement about governance, about what the aims and objectives of the service are, who they are for, why they have been adopted, and how they will be carried out, particularly in relation to extending access. Although some aims and objectives have been set out eg a preschool institution is a nurturant-educational and recreational institution there is no clear accompanying statement about how this might reflect the rights and needs of the majority of children who do not attend, or what will happen to them. There is no related policy on access or affordability or costed targets which might govern future progress, and no independent data on which to base policy. A comprehensive policy on governance, would also illustrate how all the various policy areas are linked together.

2. **Quality**

Quality in early childhood services is not a straightforward or easily measurable concept. At its simplest it describes the outcomes individual children achieve, usually defined in terms of subsequent school performance or early learning readiness, and if such a simple definition is accepted, then one of the ways in which it can be measured is by testing children individually. However, this can be very time-consuming, intrusive and inconsistent.

But it is also well-established, and widely accepted in the EU/OECD documentation that quality exists at a systemic level, and certain policy frameworks are more likely than others to produce good results. Broadly, quality is more likely to be achieved through well-qualified well-remunerated members of staff working in good premises, following a well-defined curriculum, and working in well-designed and well equipped premises. Quality also presumers continuous monitoring, feedback and research at classroom and systemic level. Quality, in other words, exists at the level of the classroom, and is maintained at the level of the system. It is also, according to the EU/OECD model, to do with the breadth of the services offered and in the acknowledgement of the wider circumstances of families which lead them to choose to use services. A quality service also demonstrates sensitivity to vulnerable children and their parents. ECEC services are only sustainable if they are adequately funded, and the funding mechanisms in place, and the extent to which they mirror the aims and objectives of the policy, is also an aspect of quality.

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2 It is worth noting that, as indicated above, the Reggio Emilia nurseries, which by common consent are the best in the world, and have attracted worldwide attention in terms of the level of work children achieve, do not follow the usual rules for quality. These nurseries are characterized by an open, project based curriculum decided upon by staff, parents and children together; careful documentation and analysis and display of children’s work; good learning spaces; and an emphasis on art, self-expression and environment; and an evaluation based on continuous staff discussion and reflection in ongoing staff training sessions, and on the documentation of children’s collective projects. Whilst this exceptional system is a product of local circumstances in Northern Italy, and cannot be transferred elsewhere, nevertheless it serves to emphasize the range of possibilities and the importance of
By these criteria, the preschool system in Uzbekistan has many gaps.

3. Regulation, Monitoring and Evaluation:

Policy in Uzbekistan is currently dispersed through a series of accumulative regulatory statements, which are framed as orders and instructions. Regulation is in one sense the lynch-pin of the current system in Uzbekistan. There are elaborate monitoring mechanisms in place in order to ensure compliance with the regulations. Changes to provision are conceived of in terms of providing new regulations, to which people must comply. As UNICEF has commented, in a previous document:

Policy development or change does not have to be a top-down process, resting solely in the hands of lawmakers and ministry officials. Most importantly, policy is not created in a vacuum. Every local solution, successful research project, or advocacy effort has the potential to influence the thinking of decision-makers about what best supports young children and their families. As parents, teachers, community leaders or concerned citizens, we can all impact on robust and effective policy formation.

Monitoring, evaluation and research should instead provide robust data by which the effectiveness of the system can be reviewed and adapted, and clear choices made between competing priorities. Previous analyses suggest that the current statistical data is relatively narrow in scope, and not transparent or easily accessible.

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4  Republic of Uzbekistan Improving Early Childhood Care and Education. WB report 2013
These questions of *policy, quality and monitoring, evaluation and research*, are closely linked. What is quality, and how are definitions of quality understood and shared? Can different kinds of services (full-time/long term or part-time/short/term) achieve similar results in terms of quality? From a children's rights perspective, it is unacceptable to have a system which offers "quality" provision only to a segment of the population, and which in general does not reach children from more vulnerable population. On the other hand, rapid expansion without "quality" is also likely to be ineffective. Increased access ideally should go hand in hand with quality.

The tension arises because of limited and finite resources. How can expansion be prioritized so that the most fair and cost-effective services are developed? What kind of evidence is necessary to evaluate services and underpin changes?

These are complex questions that all countries attempting to develop policies on ECEC have had to address. There is little doubt that there is now a world wide impetus to extend and develop early childhood education and care services, that no modern nation can ignore. ECEC services are intimately connected with school performance and school success. International organizations such as UNICEF, the World Bank, OECD, EU, WHO and UNESCO have been at the centre of these debates, and have supported countries wishing to develop their services.

This policy review has tried to explain the policy frameworks which have been developed internationally. In particular, it has matched Uzbek policy against current EU/OECD policies on ECEC, since this approach offers a heterogeneous approach which reflects the realities of diverse provision.

**Workshop on the Results of the Policy Review on Preschool Education in Uzbekistan, 26/27th April, Tashkent**

A draft of this preschool policy document was presented in a workshop organized by UNICEF for a wide variety of participants, from the ministries and from the regions, and from various sectors in preschool. At the end of the workshop, participants were asked to prioritize their concerns about policy and provision for an action plan, in the light of the EU/OECD model presented at the workshop. The following priorities were agreed:

**A Five Year Plan for Early Education and Care in Uzbekistan: Workshop Conclusions**

**A Central Policy Statement:**

- There should be a clear restatement of the principles of the service, who it is for and what it aims to achieve, and how it fits into the education system.
- The restatement should include a discussion and definition of quality.
- The existing orders and regulations should be reviewed, co-ordinated, and reduced.

**Access:**

- It should be firmly restated in any new policy framework that, as for primary school, all children are entitled to preschool experience.
- There should be consideration of a compulsory preschool year for all children.
- There should be consideration of how increases in provision might best be achieved for different age groups: 0-3, 3-5, 5-7 and what hours they should attend.
- In remote rural areas, access should be linked to schools, or to local community buildings.
- Access should be targeted in line with the new building/renovation programmes.
- There should be some consideration given to the needs of working women.
Staffing and Training:

It was agreed that initial and in-service training should be part of a new policy document: it should include consideration of the following aspects:

• How can existing staff be upgraded and what avenues are open to employees who wish to improve their qualifications?
• How can a new workforce be trained as provision expands?
• What in-service training should be offered and how it can be accredited?
• The content of training should be reviewed in the light of new policies.
• What institutions should be involved in these different aspects of training?
• Staff should be better remunerated, according to their qualifications.
• How should these different aspects of training be financed - are some avenues more economic than others?

Evaluation, Monitoring and Assessment:

• Data collection should be broadened and co-ordinated, and made open to all on the web, from local to national data, in order to inform decision making at every level.
• Attestation, testing and inspection should be thoroughly reviewed and costed, with a view to organizing a simplified, unified system.
• Independent, scientific research should be conducted on various aspects of the service, and various kinds of assistance eg access, given to academics and independent researchers.

Other Issues:

The issues mentioned above were priorities; but many other issues, for instance the integration of children with special needs, were discussed at the meeting.

Confidence was expressed in UNICEF support, backing and publicity, in order to take this agenda forward.
Appendix 1

Rapid Policy Development: ECEC in 4 Countries

Most high and middle income countries are developing their provision for young children, and international agencies like UNICEF, the World Bank and the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development in Paris) are taking up the cause of early childhood education and care on a global scale.

I want to look briefly at a few examples of countries who have significantly expanded their provision in the last 10 years – Germany, Finland, Romania, and slightly nearer home, Kazakhstan.

Germany had the problem of reconciling early childhood education and care in East Germany, which was closely modelled on the Soviet system, and in West Germany, which was better resourced but catered for far fewer children. In the East, first of all, many kindergartens were closed, and teachers had to retrain. But now the system is better integrated. Almost all children aged 3-5 attend preschool, and increasingly younger children attend, and the hours the kindergartens are opened also cater for working mothers. Teacher training has been upgraded to university level, and education and the new education curriculum is now given a much more prominent role in training. The Regions or Lande have a central role in organizing provision.

Finland has a strong commitment to lifelong education, as a means of achieving a thriving successful society. For many years, the OECD has rated it as the best education system in the world- even although there is very little testing or inspection or quality assurance, and it is strongly autonomous at every level. Preschool provision was developed partly because of the need for working women in the economy, so women could work without neglecting their children. Pre-school teachers are very well educated at university level. The small municipal authorities are responsible for planning kindergartens in their area, but the planning is undertaken with parents, teachers and even the children themselves. There is a strong emphasis on outdoor education in the curriculum.

Romania in 2011 revised its law on education to accommodate preschool. It is divided into three segments: 0-3, 3-4, and 4-5 years and provided mainly in kindergartens. Children attend from 4-10 hours per day. About 73% of children aged 3 and over attend such provision. Funding is provided to local authorities on a per capita basis. Quality standards for early education are developed by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education. Training for teachers is in special high schools rather than in universities, but gradually more teachers will be trained at university level, and some masters courses are also available. One big issue faced by Romania is the Roma, or gypsy population, who are often despised outsiders.

One central Asian country which has been influenced by these European developments is Kazakhstan. I spent some time in Kazakhstan in 2003, as part of an education mapping exercise commissioned by the Asian Development Bank. After the fall of the Soviet empire, in 1990, there was a UNICEF-INNOCENTI project monitoring post transition child-wellbeing in central Asia. Provision for children worsened everywhere in the region. In Kazakhstan kindergarten provision had fallen from 50% coverage of the relevant age group to 11% coverage. Kindergartens serving state farms and industries had been shut down and abandoned, and very many municipal kindergartens were in a poor state of repair. It was a very dispiriting experience to visit these derelict buildings which had once been state of the art kindergartens, and it was sad to talk to parents who had once had high expectations of kindergarten provision, but now had nothing.

But in less than 20 years Kazakhstan has bounced back, partly influenced by the EU/OECD policy framework I have been discussing in the previous session. Through determined Government action, and sustainable public funding, it is now a realistic expectation that there will be full enrolment of all children over 3 by 2020 (It is currently 73%).
My information for this presentation comes from an OECD report on Kazakhstan, published last year, so the data analysis is recent and reliable. The OECD and the EU work very closely together and share data, and the OECD report on Kazakhstan uses European countries – mainly Finland, as a comparator. The reason for using Finland is that it has had the best PISA¹ results (the performance of children aged 15 on standard maths, science and language tests) of any OECD country for many years, i.e. it is a very successful education system.

So in this session I will review the situation in Kazakhstan, using the same framework for analysis as I used in the previous session, when I explained the OECD/EU approaches to policy making.

Policy – Governance

The President of Kazakhstan has taken a direct interest in these policies, and his political backing, and that of the education ministers, has been very important, and given the issue a high profile.

Kazakhstan now has a co-ordinated service and a coherent long-term strategy. All services, including care services are under the Ministry of Education. Funding and monitoring responsibilities are shared between the central, regional/state level and local level. Standard setting and curriculum development is solely at the central level. The policy planning has been very detailed.

The intention of the reforms was to increase provision, to address inequity and make provision equally accessible to all children, and to try to address the Kazakh/Russian language divide – teaching was supposed to be available in both languages.

Access

Kazakhstan has introduced a legal entitlement to a place in ECEC for all children aged 1-6. Any parent who wants a place for their child is entitled to have one, wherever they live. The government has set targets for expansion and allocated budget funds to meet the targets. Preschool education is free, but parents pay monthly for meals. Special needs schools are free. There is also an increasing private sector.

Children attend both part-time and full-time, from 45-120 hours per week. About 16% of 1-3 year olds attend kindergarten 50-60 hours per week.

Participation rates in pre-primary education for children aged between 3-6 increased by more than 49% between 2005 and 2013. By 2014, there were 164 brand new kindergartens, offering 23,000 places and 800 community preschool centres for about 20,000 children. The policy has not been achieved through add on part-time classes for poorer children whose parents can’t afford kindergarten, as in many other countries. Nor is it an expansion of the private sector, as has happened elsewhere. Instead there is a new government programme of expansion of education and care, to which all children are entitled.

The kindergartens are purpose built stand-alone buildings for 4-12 groups of children.

The community preschools are much smaller than kindergartens, with no more than 3 groups and may be purpose built rooms in residential buildings, or new purpose built stand-alone premises.

Both kinds of provision offer full time and part-time care and education.

To achieve these goals, Kazakhstan implemented a comprehensive set of measures;

• substantial policy development with political backing, unifying and expanding services and providing legal entitlements;

• a significant increase in the number of newly build facilities, with clear targets and a budget to match

• improved accountability on the part of the regional administration, for developing and maintaining the expansion programme

• various tax breaks for those wishing to set up new nurseries or for products linked to kindergarten e.g. books or toys

¹ OECD PISA – Programme for International Student Assessment
• the expansion of early education and childcare in the Kazakh language, and
• guaranteed financial support for low-income families
• openness to the OECD/EU model and external monitoring and research.

As well as the above measures, Kazakhstan has attempted to keep up with the traditional quality measures as listed below:

**Employment and Professionalization of Staff**

Training has had to expand to keep up with the new kindergartens. 58% of staff are university trained, and 38% are vocationally trained at secondary level, and there are regular requirements for in-service training. But wages are low. And pre-primary teachers earn only around half the average wage, almost 20% less than a primary teacher. Over the course of their career, they may receive a salary increase of upto 30%.

These figures are low compared with the OECD/EU average, where teachers are paid more in most countries. In many countries teachers not only have university education, but have some postgraduate training, and in some, even opportunities to do their own research. Also other countries it is not uncommon to find men working with children, especially in Finland and other Scandinavian countries

**Curriculum**

Kazakhstan has several national curriculum frameworks for different ECEC programmes and age groups. The State Programme of Preschool preparation covers the age group 5-7 years and overlaps with primary school. There are other curricular programmes for 5 year olds, 3-4 year olds, and 1-3 year olds. This ensures children will receive similar minimum inputs, and to that extent is a measure of quality.

But the curriculum is relatively rigid. There is very little autonomy at kindergarten or even local level. Children and parents are not involved in developing projects with staff – as they might be in Finland or Italy for example. In most, but not all, of the kindergarten pictures from Kazakhstan, children are clearly following instructions.

**Infrastructure – Staff Child Ratios, and Buildings and Equipment:**

Group sizes are relatively large (20). Finland, the comparator country has much smaller groups. In Kazakhstan, there are two teachers per group, sharing their working time over the school day, so although groups are large, there is still is a high staff child ratio. There are also supernumerary staff, assistants for teachers and specialists of various kinds.

**Infrastructure – Buildings and Equipment**

There is not very much information about this in the OECD report, but it is clear that the substantial new-build kindergarten programme includes new inside and outdoor equipment, and new technology such as interactive whiteboards. However, pre-2003 all kindergartens were built to a standard Soviet model and were very similar, whatever part of Kazakhstan they served, and some of them had swimming pools and other health facilities. Some of this has been replicated in the new kindergartens.

Perhaps there are now new and more imaginative designs, which increase children's autonomy, although since the system is very centralized, this is unlikely.

**Parents as Partners**

There is very little information about the role of parents in the system. I could find dozens of portraits of politicians opening nurseries, but I could not find one picture of a parent groups or of any kind of parent participation, other than parental attendance at the shows the children put on. The OECD comment that there is no serious attention payed to the views of children themselves, and very little to parental views.

This is in contrast with Finland where there is a strong emphasis on parental engagement, at a municipal level.
Support for Children with Special Needs

Children who are disabled go to special institutions. There is very little or no integration. However, attention is paid to mother tongue language, and it is intended that schools should be bilingual, in Kazakh-Russian, and that other languages will also be supported.

Monitoring and Evaluation.

Kazakhstan also has a detailed monitoring and regulatory system, relying on inspections, and it also tests for child development. It has a commitment to open and accessible data and monitoring data is published. OECD investigated pre-school quality monitoring in Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan rarely uses any kind of internal self-assessment, a common method in other countries.

Finland, the comparator country differs in a number of ways:

- It relies on self-evaluation, and self-assessment. The staff are encouraged to reflect on their actions and plan their own improvements. Children and parents are involved in this process.
- Finland does not test children on child development scales or in any other way;
- Again, there is a question of autonomy, the extent to which children and staff are encouraged to make their own decisions and discuss them amongst themselves and with parents, and the extent to which everything is controlled from above.

The system in Kazakhstan has been, like Uzbekistan, highly controlled, but is rapidly becoming more open. Independent research, is now encouraged, and the OECD team of researchers were given every assistance.

Summary

Kazakhstan has achieved a remarkable expansion, and this is beginning to trickle through into the PISA results. 15 year olds in Kazakhstan who attended pre-school have significantly better PISA results.

There is one independent research survey, by Habibov in 2013, suggests that expansion has reduced the unequal effects of household wealth, language spoken in household, and education of the mother. However, the wealth and education of mothers are still significant predictors of attendance. Inequality, although lessened, has not been eliminated. The reforms also failed to reduce geographical disparities in attendance as much as hoped. There is still some way to go, but it seems as though firm national commitment and detailed policy planning has turned Kazakhstan into a leader in the field of ECEC.