

CURRICULUM FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION



Branislav Pupala, Dana Masaryková,
Jana Fusková, Réka Kissné Zsámboki (Eds.)

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Project 2020-1-SK01-KA201-078304

Program for Professional Capacity Development
for Early Childhood Education and Care

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ISBN: 978-80-8140-917-2 (PDF verzia)

Published by:

Dr. Josef Raabe Slovensko, s.r.o. upon the request of Trnava University of Trnava

Edition: first

Year of publishing: 2023

Project 2020-1-SK01-KA201-078304

Program for Professional Capacity Development for Early Childhood Education and Care

The publication was published within the Erasmus + project " Program for Professional Capacity Development for Early Childhood Education and Care" under the number 2020-1-SK01-KA201-078304 in the period 20th December 2020 – 19th December 2023.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, early care and preschool education has been receiving a lot of attention all over the world, and this area is experiencing significant development. There are still large differences between countries in ensuring the extent and quality of care for children in early and preschool age, and not all children are provided with care and education of the same quality. However, the drive for progress is evident, at local and regional levels, but undoubtedly also through global international initiatives and policies.

The development and quality of early care and preschool education is linked to the professionalization of those who provide it, and the degree of their professionalism is also a condition and an indicator of the level of provision of this service. In the field of early care and preschool education, new knowledge is intensively accumulated, on which the profession is currently built and which become part of the professional profile and competences of those who work in the field in teaching or other supporting professions. Teachers, educators and service providers in early care and preschool education are prepared for their professions through initial educational programs, which are a start to the profession, but where their professional development does not end, but only begins. They subsequently build their professional competences in practical activities and with the accompaniment and support of various professional development programs that maintain, innovate and improve their professional competences in accordance with their needs, as well as new knowledge that is produced and transferred in the given field. Although workers with different degrees of formal education or with differentiated professional profiles work in the field of early care and preschool education, there are undoubtedly cores of knowledge that apply to everyone who works in the field and who identifies with it professionally.

This material is one of the basic outputs of the Erasmus+ international cooperation project entitled *Program for Professional Capacity Development for Early Childhood Education and Care*, on which experts in early care and preschool education from the universities of four European countries worked together: Trnava University (Slovakia), University of Sopron (Hungary), University of Veliko Tarnovo (Bulgaria) and University of Ljubljana (Slovenia), as well as cooperating kindergartens in these countries. It is an output that tries to provide a framework curriculum of professional development for experts working in early care and preschool education services and which represents a selection of the current core knowledge of this field and through which the necessary professional competences of experts working in the relevant field in various positions are built.

This document is entitled *Curriculum for the development of professional competencies for early childhood care and education* and is a set of syllabi aimed at the development of professional competencies when working with children of early and preschool age in the institutional environment of nurseries and kindergartens. The material is based on a module system, which means that its content is divided into separate thematic modules, which are as follows:

1. Environment and physical space
2. Curriculum and pedagogy
3. Early childhood educators and caregivers
4. Partnerships with families and communities
5. Young children with special needs

The choice of modules was not random. It specifically corresponds with the thematic units of the widely known assessment tool ACEI GGA – *Global Guidelines Assessment for Quality Improvements in Early Childhood Education* (Global Guidelines for the Education and Care of Young Children - Childhood Education International (ceinternational1892.org)) which connects the established ranges of quality indicators of early education with the professional competences of experts who work in this service. At the same time, the relationships between the contents of professional education and the key factors that determine high-quality and effective work with young children are validated.

Each module of this program is processed in such a way that it contains the basic characteristics of the topic of the module, defines the learning outcomes (knowledge and skills) that can be achieved by completing the education in the given module, and the module's own content/syllabus. It is divided into thematic units, which are characterized and specified in detail. Each module ends with a selection of relevant textual sources that are available online in English, so that each module is available in an internationally used language and not limited to local sources. Of course, resources in other languages can be supplemented by users of the modules or the entire program. The resources can serve as direct study material, but they can also serve as a basis for the preparation of simplified study materials. All this depends on what purposes and for what target groups the curriculum or its individual modules will be used.

The program is intended to be flexible and adaptable. It can be used as a whole or any of the processed modules can be used separately or in combination with each other. It depends on the educational needs and interests of users or education providers. The curriculum can serve as a basis or inspiration in the development of programs of initial professional education, or in the creation of professional development programs for workers in the field of early care and preschool education. In terms of learning goals, the program is maximally set, but it is possible to reduce these goals or adapt them to the educational needs of those for whom the pro-

gram or part of it will be used. It can be adapted so that long-term and short-term professional education courses are provided on its basis.

The program is the output of an international team, has a supra-regional character and reflects European experience and reality based on current global knowledge of the field. It is not bound by specific national early care and preschool education policies. From this point of view, it is therefore universal and open also in the sense of complementing locally bound knowledge and needs.

As already mentioned, the material is the result of the joint work of academics and practitioners in the field of preschool education from Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Slovenia, and in addition to the editorial work of the authors Branislav Pupala, Dana Masaryková, Jana Fusková (Slovakia) and Réka Kissné Zsámboki (Hungary) co-authors of the document are Arianna Kitzinger, László Varga (Hungary), Emil Buzov, Gergana Krasteva (Bulgaria), Darija Skubic and Marcela Batistič-Zorec (Slovenia).

Editors

MODULE DETAILS	
Module Title	ENVIRONMENT AND PHYSICAL SPACE
Description of the Module	<p>Socialization and education is not only an intellectual and interactive activity that takes place in interpersonal communication based on curricular assumptions, but takes place in physical space, environment and time, which have a direct and indirect impact on socialization and education. The space, material and physical environment as well as the temporal sequencing of early education have a specific socialization impact on children's development, which is so powerful that it is sometimes referred to as the "hidden" or "third" teacher.</p> <p>By physical environment here, in addition to the broad environment and the place where children live, we mean mainly the architectural arrangement of the environment (kindergarten buildings, internal organization of spaces, classrooms, corridors, toilet corners, dining rooms, transition rooms), exterior spaces (playgrounds, school gardens, connections with surrounding environment), as well as the material equipment of classrooms and other spaces that create their own learning environment.</p> <p>This module conveys topics related to the influence of the physical environment on the socialization of children in early education. What is actually revealed is the "hidden curriculum" resulting from the organization of the spatial conditions of education with its impact on physical socialization, cognitive and emotional development, in connection with the safety of children, ensuring their satisfaction, well-being and health. The module also provides tools to observe, evaluate and design the physical and material environment in accordance with the needs of a qualified provider of early care and preschool education.</p> <p>The module relies mainly on the knowledge offered through the research stream of "spatial studies" in preschool education research. The goal is to provide up-to-date knowledge in the field and strengthen the ability of workers to participate in the creation of a quality physical environment, its adequate organization, so that it has a stimulating and developmental impact on children.</p>

MODULE LEARNING OUTCOMES (knowledge and skills)	
Upon successful completion of this module, the student will be able to:	
LO1	Understand the influence of the physical environment and space on the socialization, development and education of children, understand space as a "hidden" teacher.
LO2	Design and create the physical environment of the classroom and surrounding areas, which is safe, stimulating and ensures a healthy and happy stay for children.
LO3	Understand and use the architectural solution of spaces as a socialization factor with its stimulating and inhibiting factors.
LO4	Organize indoor and outdoor spatial conditions in such a way that they enable effective communication and interaction between children, between the teacher and the children, to enable balanced opportunities for spontaneous and organized activities, autonomy, intimacy and social activity of the child.
LO5	Harmonize the spatial organization of the environment in accordance with the stimulation and organization of children's movement, their physical socialization, aesthetic, cognitive and emotional development.
LO6	Assess and provide material that is safe, stimulating, enables active play activities, stimulates thinking, positive emotions and is appropriate for children's variable abilities.
LO7	Ensure hygienic conditions of socialization, development and education that correspond to children's needs, relevant hygiene standards and be able to assess them from the point of view of children's satisfaction, their safety and health.
LO8	Encourage children's participation in organizing and arranging the environment.
LO9	Observe the properties of space and the physical environment from the position of a third person (researcher).
LO10	Use available scales and tools to assess the quality of the physical environment.

INDICATIVE CONTENT (LIST OF TOPICS TO BE COVERED) Detailed syllabus and Content annotation

- **Space and place in early education**

Individual, social and physical space as three factors of the materiality of the environment. Place and space in the socialization process, the creation of children's identities, their autonomy and relations with the world. The relationship between physical space and place that is co-created between adults and children and enables meaningful action for children. Space for children and children's space. Current thematisation of the problem in research and early education theory. Human geography of the early education environment.

- **The architecture of the building, its internal spatial organization and their socialization effects**

Institutionalization of preschool education and setting aside the environment for its implementation. Conditions of collective early care and preschool education. Buildings for early care and preschool education. Spatial analysis of school buildings, especially buildings for early care and education. The location of the building. Floor plan of the building. Architecture and layout of rooms. Relationships between rooms. Spaces and age structure of children. Classrooms, bedrooms, playrooms, corridors, dressing rooms, transition rooms. Hygienic rooms. Interactive rooms, zones for the public (parents). Kitchen and dining room. "Forbidden" zones. Premises for staff. "Boys" and "girls" zones. Spatial movements of children. Space and timetable of classes. Public and private space and their interactions. Eating rituals and their spatial connections.

- **Spatial arrangement of the classroom and its impact on children's communication and social behaviour**

Spatial freedom and limitations in the classroom. Class size and child group size. Spatial structure of the environment. Analysis of spatial zones in the classroom. Curriculum and classroom space. Class in terms of daily regime and time schedule. Stimulativeness of the environment. Arrangement of furniture in the classroom. Equipment and furniture for children. Learning zones, rest zones, joint activity zones, private and public zones. Visible and invisible zones. Environmental safety. Zones for movement, interaction, isolated zones. Teacher's and children's space in the classroom. Interaction of different zones. Noise zone and silence zone. Flexibility and fixity of the classroom environment.

- **Children's spatial perception**

Children's perception of space from a developmental perspective. Spatial orientation of children. Perception of shapes, sizes and textures of objects.

Sounds in the environment. Objects and children: permanence of objects, their movement. Directional orientation of children in space. Persons in space and time. Coordination of senses and motor skills in spatial and time orientation. Help in spatial orientation. Perception of distance. Space and orientation in space in relation to the early education curriculum.

- **Exterior environment and its organization**

Functions of the exterior of the preschool. Outdoor activities in early education. The exterior as a place and as a space. Children's gardens and playgrounds. The exterior as a natural environment, as a space for play, movement, discovery. Exterior and early education curriculum. Stimulating possibilities of the exterior environment. Areas of the external environment. Exterior and weather, environmental aspects of the exterior environment. Safety of the exterior environment. Action zones of playgrounds and gardens. Borders of interior and exterior, transitions between internal and external environments. Interactions between children, groups of children and adults in the external environment. Dynamics of activities in the outdoor environment.

- **Material equipment of the learning environment**

Economics of material equipment of the learning environment. Furniture, its arrangement, adaptation to children. Furniture selection criteria. Plastics, natural and metal materials. Toys and their relation to the curriculum. Criteria for choosing toys and play material. Organization of the availability of toys. Literacy supporting material. Books, children's magazines, literature sources. Availability of printed books and magazines. Art and modelling material. Material, sounds and music. Writing material. Working tools. Tools for exercise and sports games. Floor material. Material equipment of classrooms and rest areas. Toilets and sanitary facilities. Material safety, types of material used. Wood, plastic, metal, sand, water. Plants and animals in the classroom and in the environment of the facility. Interactive material, computer and information technologies.

- **Physical environment in changes of seasons and climatic conditions**

Seasonal conditions of spatial behaviour. Organizational regime of the institution with regard to the annual season, weather and climatic conditions. Indoor and outdoor activities in different seasons and climatic conditions. Early education and physical geography of the environment (comparative approach to areas with different geographical locations). Visualization of the institution and the classroom in different seasons. Short and long days of the year, children's biorhythm. Health implications of seasonal conditions. Curriculum and seasonal cycles.

- **Aesthetics of the environment from the point of view of children and adults**

Visuality of spaces. Visual references for children and adults. Walls and bulletin boards in the premises of the preschool. Decoration as a kind of children's and teacher's art. Colour and visual occupation of the walls. Distribution of power in the aesthetic treatment of spaces. Creativity and participation of children in creating the aesthetics of the environment. The concept of environmental cleanliness. Rituals of cleaning in a preschool environment. The boundaries of cleanliness and mess in the eyes of children and preschool staff. Children's aesthetics and aesthetics for children in the environment of classrooms and preschool institutions. Exhibitions for the public and for children. Museum aesthetics vs. living aesthetics of the environment. The tradition of aesthetics and art in different models of preschool care.

- **Space and movement**

The preschool environment in terms of movement dynamics. Spaces for movement, moving and quiet mode. Stimulating and calming function of the premises. Disciplines the body through space. Physical activities of children in early education. Exteriors and interiors in motion mode. Targeted and spontaneous movement of children in preschool. Action radius of children in different age categories. Encouraging movement skills in space. Furnishing of premises and movement of children. Space from the point of view of targeted and physical education of children.

- **Hygiene in the socialization of children**

Traditions of hygiene standards in early care and preschool education. Boundaries between health and educational concerns. Medicalization of the preschool environment. Hygienic zones in preschool facilities. Hygienic rules, hygienic rituals. Organization of hygiene operations. Development of hygienic autonomy in early childhood. Environment, visibility and arrangement of hygiene facilities (WC, bathrooms) in preschools. Forms of body care. Staff clothing and children's clothing. Patterns and rituals of dressing. Sleep hygiene and the environment for sleeping and resting. Eating and drinking regime. Food in early education: eating, dining and eating rituals. Food preparation and distribution. Hygienic restrictions and recommendations, prohibitions and orders. Menu and the concept of "healthy eating". Eating behaviour of children. Between illness and health in preschool education. Professions in early education: between healthcare and teaching.

- **Time sequences in the organization of early education**

Early care and education in the perspective of time limits. Full-day, half-day or shorter stay in the facility: perception of the mission of early education. Analysis of daily schedules. Time flexibility and stability in time arrangement.

Time sequences depending on the age of the children. Time sequences of children and time sequences of preschool workers. Active time and passive time. Time organization of the class and time organization of the institution. Ritualization of time sequences and transitions between them. Socialization and discipline over time.

- **Tools for evaluating the physical and learning environment**

Evaluation of the environment in terms of the following criteria: transparency, structure, flexibility and responsiveness, accessibility of materials, functional diversity, and representations of children in the environment. Use of ACEI Global guidelines assessment for early childhood education. Early childhood environment rating scale (ECERS 3). Ethnographic observation of the environment.

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MODULE DETAILS	
Module Title	CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY
Description of the Module	<p>The curriculum provides a framework of objectives, content and themes for activities to gain experience for children in early care and early childhood education. It is a tool that strengthens the educational function of this care, dampens the elementariness and increases the professionalism of the service provided. It is a tool that has several levels: state, regional, local, intra-school, classroom, often complemented by tailor-made individual education programs especially for children with special needs. Not all levels always formally exist (many countries do not specify a curriculum for early care up to the age of three), there are always at least intuitive programs of activities and development at the level of specific groups of children.</p> <p>The curriculum at each level can be diverse and is related to the overall philosophy of care and early learning. At the national level, it can be a detailed and content-oriented curriculum associated with the detailed definition of standards of children's learning results. It can also be a very framework curriculum that is based on the values promoted in education. In early care, a holistic curriculum is preferred that takes into account children's overall socialization and development and adapts to their needs.</p> <p>Early education requires a very specific curriculum that is characterized by sensitivity and responsiveness to the children themselves. It must be in real harmony with and respond to children's developmental characteristics and current abilities. Especially in the early stages (for children under three years of age), the curriculum cannot be perceived other than based on interactions with children's current abilities.</p> <p>The curriculum also guides what pedagogy and approaches adults choose in the education and developmental support of children. It goes without saying that pedagogy in early education is based on stimulating children's own activities and, as a rule, takes the form of play. The pedagogical repertoire in early childhood education must be very varied and flexible. It should also be taken into account that spontaneous socialization and intentional learning are intertwined in early care and education, so the curriculum is not closed and cannot always be explicit.</p>

Description of the Module	<p>The holistic curriculum also does not exclude a direction towards subsequent academic training and relevant cultural socialization. Therefore, it also requires structured pedagogy within traditional literacy areas (language literacy, numeracy, science literacy, etc.). Here, too, however, pedagogy takes into account integrated approaches and playful learning activities.</p> <p>A professionally prepared and functional curriculum is associated with the ability to evaluate its results and effectiveness. Curriculum and pedagogy evaluation is part of professional work in early care and early childhood education and a condition for its improvement.</p>
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MODULE LEARNING OUTCOMES (knowledge and skills)	
Upon successful completion of this module, the student will be able to:	
LO1	Identify the diverse forms of the early learning curriculum in an international perspective.
LO2	Actively use the formal curriculum in curriculum development for specific groups of children.
LO3	Apply the curriculum through environment and variable learning activities.
LO4	Understand the responsive curriculum with regard to children's developmental needs and possibilities.
LO5	Transform the curriculum into meaningful learning and play activities.
LO6	Design local and school curriculum.
LO7	Create a specific plan of learning activities.
LO8	Apply a wide range of stimulating teaching methods, using appropriate teaching resources and materials that stimulate active learning of children.
LO9	Evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum and applied pedagogy.

INDICATIVE CONTENT (LIST TOPICS TO BE COVERED) Detailed syllabus and Content annotation

- **The curriculum in historical context and in international comparison**

Curriculum in early childhood and school education. The birth of the state curriculum and curriculum of individual institutions. Development of early care and early childhood education with respect to their objectives and functions. Centralization of the curriculum in socialist regimes and in the modern history of education. Globalization of the curriculum today. Regulation of education through curricular policy.

- **Toddler and early childhood curriculum**

Care, socialization, developmental support and education. Intersections and emphasis in individual periods from birth to school entry. Continuous curriculum, split programs. Is a curriculum for toddlers needed? From body care, communicative socialization to the academic curriculum with preparation for entering school and school readiness. Curriculum in the system of unitary and split care. Long-term and short-term educational care and learning plans at different ages.

- **Curriculum management**

Curriculum development and innovation at central level. Subjects influencing curriculum development. Political, professional and public interests in curricular development. Transfer of the state curriculum at local, regional and institutional level. The curriculum and the parental public. Curriculum of specific early care and early childhood education facilities. Curriculum and preschool staff. Curriculum and teaching materials, methodological guides and learning environment. Curriculum in classes and groups of children. Participation of the community, parents and children in curriculum development.

- **Curriculum goals, learning standards and educational content**

Early care functions and early and preschool education goals. Social, health, economic and pedagogical functions. “Pedagogisation” of early care and early childhood education. Curricular objectives in relation to educational and social function. Long-term and short-term goals. Goals for developmental domains: cognitive, social, emotional, physical-motor. Goals for learning content areas. Standards of early care and early childhood education. Standard as a performance requirement. The detail or framework of learning standards.

- **Responsive and holistic curriculum**

The child’s world, manifestations of development and communication with the environment. Connectivity of children’s physical, mental and social lives. The actions of children in the environment. The sensitivity of care and education

to the life manifestations of the child. Curriculum in response to children's developmental needs and possibilities. Complexity, openness and integrity of the curriculum. Connecting the curriculum to everyday life, family environment and community. Communicativeness in the environment, flexibility of goals and permeability of development, care, socialization and education. Well-being and satisfaction of children.

- **Inclusive curriculum and early learning individualization**

Cultural, social and individual diversity of young children. The curriculum as an opportunity for every child. Universal learning design. Principles of inclusive education: participation of each child, support of children and teachers, orientation on children's potential, flexibility of curriculum and environment, cooperation with parents and community. Removing barriers to participation in early childhood education. Common learning environment and individualized approach to development. Individual development programs. Support measures according to the specific needs of children.

- **Curriculum and educational areas**

General domains of development and specific content areas of preschool education. Interrelationship within a holistic approach. Domains: physical development, communication and language, personal, social and emotional development. Content areas: early literacy, mathematical ideas, understanding of the surrounding world, expressive art and design. Integration of domains and areas in early care and education programs and activity plans. Expression of domains and content areas in curricular documents and programs. Learning activities in relation to domains about content.

- **Developing early care and early childhood education curricula**

Planning specific programs for early care and early childhood education. Annual and short-term learning plans. Learning plan design. Learning goals in the curriculum. The curriculum as a design of learning activities. Responsibility for the curriculum and its implementation. Curriculum and curriculum flexibility. Learning activities, routine activities, and normal curriculum routine. The curriculum as a package of learning materials and activity design. Curriculum stability and innovation. The curriculum as a tool for communication and cooperation with the family and the wider environment. Formality and functionality of curricula.

- **Pedagogical methods**

Methods as an overall approach to children and their development. The method as a communication strategy of adults and children and in the communication of children. Methods in relation to domains of development and content areas of learning. Methods such as regulating children's actions and

activities. Methods in relation to individual and group activities. Methods and learning environment. Flexibility and variability of methods. The naturalness of methods to the abilities of children. Methodical materials. Play as a natural learning method. Child-led and teacher-led learning activities. Methods in the mode of the day.

- **Learning materials and learning environment**

Environment in terms of stimulation for children. Environment and learning. Material provision of learning activities. Educational material and its selection. Resources for the creation of didactic material. Toys and their quality. Natural and artificial teaching materials. Teaching material in relation to the individual components of the curriculum. Digitization of the learning environment. Ecological aspects of teaching materials. Safety of the material environment. Teaching material in exterior and interior. Teaching material in relation to the cultural and social diversity of children.

- **Evaluation of curriculum**

Curriculum evaluation at state, local, school and class level. Confrontation of planned, implemented and achieved curriculum. Curriculum innovation according to evaluation results. Evaluation as a control tool and an innovation tool. Evaluation through education standards. Evaluation of curriculum design and functionality. Evaluation tools and procedures. Evaluation and effectiveness of the curriculum. External and internal curriculum evaluation. Curricular changes and curricular innovations. Evaluation in the inductive and deductive process of curriculum development.

- **Assessment of children's progress**

Formative assessment as a natural part of learning and developmental process. Daily observation of children and its regular reflection. Observing children's success, progress, interests and learning practices. Sharing the results of observations with parents and the entire team involved in caregiving. Record progress. Stages of formal processing of the assessment as a child profile. Informative saturation of the report about the child. Documentation of children's learning progress. Portfolio as documentation material. Assessment as a tool for individualization of education and choice of support measures.

Resources

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MODULE DETAILS	
Module Title	EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS AND CAREGIVERS
Description of the Module	<p>Early childhood education and caregiving play a pivotal role in the holistic development of young children. This field recognizes the critical period of development from birth to age 6, emphasizing the importance of providing a nurturing and stimulating environment during these formative years. Early childhood education and caregiving encompass a range of activities focused on promoting children's physical, cognitive, social, and emotional well-being. It involves creating an inclusive and supportive environment where children can explore, learn, and develop their unique potentials.</p> <p>This module encompasses the history, challenges, and evolving role of professionals responsible for the care and education of young children (up to 6 years old). Throughout European history, there has been a recognition of the importance of early childhood education and caregiving in providing a strong foundation for children's development. The field has evolved from informal settings to structured institutions, such as nurseries, kindergartens and preschools, where professionals play a crucial role in nurturing young children's physical, social, emotional, and cognitive growth. European countries have made significant strides in establishing policies and frameworks to support early childhood education, focusing on quality standards, access, and inclusivity.</p> <p>However, the field of early childhood education and caregiving also faces several historical and current challenges. One prominent challenge is the persistent gender inequality within the profession. Despite the increasing recognition of the importance of early childhood education, it is still predominantly seen as women's work. This gender bias not only impacts the professional identity and status of early childhood educators but also perpetuates stereotypes and limits opportunities for men to enter the field. Efforts are being made to address this issue and promote gender diversity in the profession.</p> <p>Another challenge faced by early childhood educators and caregivers in Europe is the complex nature of their professional identity and the blurred boundaries between education, care, social care, and health care. Professionals in this field require a diverse skill set, encompassing pedagogical expertise,</p>

<p>Description of the Module</p>	<p>nurturing and caregiving abilities, and an understanding of child development. Balancing these multiple roles and meeting the diverse needs of children, families, and communities can be demanding. Furthermore, the recognition and professional status of early childhood educators vary across European countries, leading to disparities in working conditions, salaries, and access to professional development opportunities.</p> <p>In recent years, there has been an increased focus on addressing the challenges and enhancing the professionalization of early childhood educators and caregivers in Europe. Efforts are being made to elevate the status of the profession, provide adequate training and qualifications, improve working conditions, and ensure fair compensation. Professional networks, unions, and international organizations play a crucial role in advocating for the rights and well-being of early childhood professionals, while also facilitating knowledge exchange and collaboration across countries. The ongoing commitment to addressing challenges and promoting high-quality early childhood education and caregiving is essential for nurturing the next generation of European citizens and fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.</p> <p>This module provides an in-depth examination of the field of profession of preschool education and caregiving, highlighting the critical role of professionals in nurturing and supporting the holistic development of young children. Participants will explore the historical, ethical, professional, and socio-cultural dimensions that shape the practice of preschool educators and caregivers. Key topics include the historical development of preschool education, ethical considerations, professional identity and status, gender inequality, professional unions and the rights of professionals working in this field and explore potential risks of burnout syndrome since its high prevalence in the profession.</p> <p>By the end of the module, students will have gained the knowledge, skills, and perspectives needed to become informed, reflective, and compassionate preschool educators and caregivers. They will be equipped to navigate the complexities of the profession, advocate for the rights of professionals working in the field, and provide high-quality care and education to young children.</p>
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MODULE LEARNING OUTCOMES (knowledge and skills)	
Upon successful completion of this module, the student will be able to:	
LO1	Understand the historical development of the early childhood education and caregiving profession in European contexts, including key figures, movements, and influential pedagogical approaches.
LO2	Analyse and critically evaluate the ethical considerations and responsibilities of early childhood educators and caregivers in relation to children's rights, respect for diversity, and inclusive practices.
LO3	Examine and reflect upon the professional status and identity of early childhood educators and caregivers, exploring the challenges they face and strategies to promote recognition and advancement within the field.
LO4	Understand the multidisciplinary nature of early childhood education and caregiving, and the importance of integrating pedagogical expertise with nurturing and caregiving abilities.
LO5	Identify and analyse the challenges and opportunities associated with the professional status and identity of Early Childhood Educators and Caregivers, and propose strategies for strengthening professional recognition and support systems in their own practice contexts.
LO6	Identify and assess the gender inequalities present within the early childhood education and caregiving profession, and propose strategies to promote gender equity.
LO7	Assess the impact of gender imbalance within the profession, critically analysing the historical and cultural factors that contribute to the perception of early childhood education and caregiving as a predominantly female domain.
LO8	Investigate the role of professional unions and international organizations in advocating for the rights, well-being, and professional development of early childhood professionals, and analyse their impact on the field.
LO9	Investigate the rights and entitlements of professionals working in the early childhood education and caregiving sector, including fair employment conditions, access to professional development, and a safe and supportive working environment.
L10	Analyse the causes, signs, and effects of burnout syndrome in the early childhood education and caregiving profession, and develop strategies for preventing and addressing burnout to promote the well-being of professionals.

INDICATIVE CONTENT (LIST OF TOPICS TO BE COVERED)

Detailed syllabus and Content annotation

- **History of the profession in european contexts**

The history of early childhood education and caregiving in Europe is characterized by diverse approaches and practices that have evolved over time. In the European context, early childhood education and caregiving can be traced back to the 19th century when pioneers such as Friedrich Froebel and Maria Montessori laid the foundation for modern pedagogical principles. The growth of industrialization and urbanization led to the establishment of kindergartens and other early childhood institutions, providing care and education for young children. Today, European countries have different models and frameworks for early childhood education and caregiving, reflecting the cultural, social, and educational contexts of each nation.

Over the course of history, the role of preschool educators and workers has evolved significantly, transforming from a simple low-skilled nursing profession to a highly specialized and professionalized field. In its early stages, preschool education was often considered a form of basic care and supervision, with little emphasis on pedagogy or educational methodologies. However, as society recognized the critical importance of early childhood education in shaping a child's development, the profession began to undergo a gradual pedagogical transformation. With growing awareness of the impact of early learning experiences, preschool educators and workers started to assume more complex and multifaceted roles, integrating educational practices and age-appropriate curriculum into their work.

As the significance of early childhood education became more apparent, there was a growing demand for highly skilled and knowledgeable professionals in the field. This led to increased professionalization, with certain categories of the profession requiring higher education and specialized training. Today, preschool educators and workers are expected to possess a deep understanding of child development, learning theories, and effective teaching strategies.

Overview of the development and evolution of early childhood education and caregiving in Europe. Key figures and pioneers in the field of early childhood education in Europe. Historical milestones and significant events that shaped the profession. Comparative analysis of approaches and policies. Legislative and policy frameworks for early childhood education in European countries. Comparison of early childhood education practices in different countries/regions.

- **Ethics of early childhood educators and professional caregivers**

Ethics play a crucial role in the practice of early childhood educators and professional caregivers. They are responsible for upholding the well-being and rights of children under their care. Ethical considerations include maintaining confidentiality, ensuring respectful interactions, and providing inclusive and equitable opportunities for all children. Early childhood professionals navigate ethical dilemmas related to cultural diversity, inclusion, discipline, and balancing the needs of individual children with those of the group. Codes of ethics and professional standards provide guidance in decision-making and promote ethical conduct in the field.

Ethical considerations in early childhood education and caregiving. Principles and values guiding ethical practices in the profession. Ethical dilemmas and challenges faced by early childhood educators and caregivers. Codes of ethics and professional standards in Europe. The role of ethics in promoting quality care and education for young children. Respecting children's rights, dignity, and autonomy. Confidentiality and privacy in early childhood settings. Historical and Current Challenges. Ethical dilemmas in practice. Balancing the best interests of children with external pressures.

- **Professional status and identity**

Early childhood educators and caregivers straddle the domains of education, care, social care, and health care. They play a critical role in children's development, fostering their learning, well-being, and socialization. However, the hybrid professional role often lacks recognition and clear professional identity. Early childhood professionals face challenges related to societal perceptions, low wages, and limited career advancement opportunities. Efforts are being made to elevate the professional status and identity of early childhood educators and caregivers through professional development, certification programs, and advocacy for improved working conditions and equitable compensation.

Core Competencies and Skills for Early Childhood Educators. Professional Recognition and Challenges. Comparative Analysis of Professional Status. Professional Development in Early Childhood Education. Core Competencies and Skills for Early Childhood Educators. Challenges in Professional Identity. Comparative analysis of training programs and qualifications. Core competencies and skills required for early childhood educators. Teamwork and Collaboration. Comparative analysis of interdisciplinary approaches to support children's development. Effective communication and collaboration among professionals. Work Conditions, salaries, and benefits. Current challenges and improvements needed.

- **Intersection of professions**

The professional status and identity of Early Childhood Educators and Caregivers occupy a unique position at the intersection of various disciplines, including education, care, social care, and health care. Their role extends beyond traditional educational practices, encompassing a holistic approach to supporting young children's growth and development. As professionals in this field, they navigate the complex landscape of providing quality education while also addressing the diverse needs of children, families, and communities. This diffusion of professional responsibilities requires a versatile skill set, combining pedagogical expertise with nurturing and caregiving abilities, as well as an understanding of child development and social dynamics.

Professional identity is shaped by the recognition of the interconnectedness between education, care, social care, and health care in fostering optimal child development. This recognition calls for a collaborative approach, as professionals in this field often collaborate with families, healthcare providers, social workers, and other specialists to provide comprehensive support to young children and their families. The multidisciplinary nature of their work highlights the importance of ongoing professional development, as Early Childhood Educators and Caregivers need to stay informed about the latest research, practices, and policies across these diverse domains.

Diffusion of Professional Skill Sets. Integration of education, care, social care, and health care. Comparative analysis of professional skill sets across countries. Professional Recognition and Challenges. Variations in professional status and qualifications across different regions. Challenges in achieving professional recognition and advancement.

- **Rights of professionals working in early childhood education and care**

Early childhood professionals have the right to fair employment conditions, including adequate wages, reasonable working hours, and access to professional development opportunities. They should have the autonomy to make decisions based on their expertise and knowledge of child development. Additionally, professionals have the right to a safe and supportive working environment that promotes their physical and mental well-being. Advocacy efforts focus on recognizing the importance of early childhood professionals and securing their rights to ensure high-quality care and education for young children.

Introduction to Rights in Early Childhood Education and Care. Legal Frameworks and International Conventions. Professional Rights and Responsibilities. Employment Rights and Conditions. Health and Safety Rights. Professional Development and Continuous Learning. Work-Life Balance and Well-being.

Advocacy and Collective Action. Promoting Diversity and Inclusion. Future Challenges and Opportunities. Advocacy for children's rights and quality early childhood education.

- **Gender inequality within the profession**

Gender inequality persists in the early childhood education and caregiving profession, where it is still perceived as primarily a woman's job. This gender imbalance affects the profession's diversity and perpetuates stereotypes. Efforts are underway to challenge these gender norms and promote gender equity within the field. Encouraging men to enter the profession, providing professional growth opportunities, and addressing biases are some strategies employed to foster gender equality. Recognizing and valuing the contributions of all early childhood professionals, regardless of gender, is essential for creating an inclusive and diverse workforce.

Historical Perspectives: Gender Roles in Early Childhood Education and Care. Impact of Gender Inequality on Professional Opportunities and Advancement. Challenges Faced by Male Professionals in Early Childhood Education and Care. Promoting Gender Equality in the Profession. Breaking Stereotypes: Encouraging Male Participation in Early Childhood Education and Care. Addressing Bias and Prejudice in Early Childhood Settings. Understanding Gender Stereotypes and Bias in the Profession. Empowering Women in Leadership Roles in Early Childhood Education and Care. Strategies for Creating Inclusive and Gender-Fair Work Environments.

- **Professional unions and international organizations in early childhood**

Professional unions and international organizations play a crucial role in advocating for the rights and well-being of early childhood professionals. Organizations such as the World Organization for Early Childhood Education (OMEPE) and the Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) provide platforms for professional networking, knowledge exchange, and collective action. They advocate for policies that support high-quality early childhood education and caregiving, promote professional development opportunities, and ensure the rights and well-being of professionals worldwide. These organizations also collaborate with governments, NGOs, and other stakeholders to shape early childhood education policies and practices.

Importance of professional associations and unions. Collective bargaining and advocacy for fair treatment. OMEPE (World Organization for Early Childhood Education). ACEI (Association for Childhood Education International). Objectives, activities, and initiatives. Professional networking and collaboration opportunities.

- **Burnout syndrome in the profession**

Early childhood professionals are at risk of experiencing burnout due to the demanding nature of their work. Burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Factors such as heavy workloads, high stress levels, and limited resources contribute to burnout in this profession. Recognizing the signs and symptoms of burnout is crucial to prevent its negative consequences on professionals' well-being and the quality of care provided to children. Strategies for prevention and addressing burnout include self-care practices, organizational support systems, and creating a positive and supportive work environment.

Understanding Burnout Syndrome in Early Childhood Education and Care. Recognizing the Signs and Symptoms of Burnout. Causes and Risk Factors for Burnout in the Profession. Impact of Burnout on Professionals, Children, and Organizations. Self-Care Strategies to Prevent Burnout. Building Resilience and Emotional Well-being. Creating Supportive Work Environments to Combat Burnout. Stress Management Techniques for Early Childhood Professionals. Seeking Help and Support: Resources for Burnout Recovery. Promoting Work-Life Balance and Sustainable Practices

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MODULE DETAILS	
Module Title	PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES
Description of the Module	<p>Parental involvement has always been an essential component of the educators-children-families cooperation. Parents, who have been considered as one of the stakeholders of the nursery/kindergarten community, play tremendous roles in the child’s educational and environmental transformation. Parents who create the conditions for developing and learning from the early years, and who support child’s development and socialisation at home are more likely to expect their child’s better academic performance and school career than those who are not actively involved in promoting their child’s activities and learning from the early years.</p> <p>Parents are the child’s first role models and play an integral part in their child’s life. The nursery and kindergarten teachers then take on this position as well. Proactive communication between these two channels can have a positive impact on the child’s educational experience and development.</p> <p>Parental involvement should not be translated simply as ‘participation’, as it better expresses the added value that this term carries including parental responsibilities, communication, volunteering, and cooperation with the institutions and with the wider community.</p> <p>Parental responsibilities means: to create conditions for housing, health and safety; open and honest interactions with child and with other parents, to support the child’s developing and learning conditions; the creation of nursery/kindergarten integration, volunteering in the life of the nursery/kindergarten and participation in decision-making in the parent bodies of the institutions.</p> <p>The following principles are very important in the cooperation between the family and the nursery/kindergarten communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cooperation should be proactive rather than reactive, the involvement of all parents should be encouraged; • cooperation should be sensitive to the diversity of families, should be responsive to the diverse cultures, living conditions, socioeconomic status and circumstances of families; • cooperation should build on parents’ involvement in the educational process • cooperation should promote parents’ self-confidence, parenting skills, and parents’ sense of self-efficacy.

Description of the Module	<p>This module covers topics related to engaging with families and communities in early childhood education and care. The module also provides good practices for engaging with families and communities according to the needs of the early care and education professional.</p> <p>The module aims to provide up-to-date knowledge in the area of working with families and communities and to strengthen the ability of staff to actively and effectively communicate and collaborate with families and communities.</p>
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MODULE LEARNING OUTCOMES (knowledge and skills)	
Upon successful completion of this module, the student will be able to:	
LO1	Understand the terms, the principles and features of partnerships with families and communities, the role of the families in the function of institutional education.
LO2	Plan the forms and actions of a proactive and stimulating parental involvement which ensures an efficient communication and collaboration with parents.
LO3	Understand and use the ways and forms of constructive and relevant communication, empathy and feedback (reporting).
LO4	Organise regular meetings, discussions and supervisions in such a way that they enable effective communication and interaction between children, between the teacher and the children, and between the nurseries/kindergartens/schools/child welfare centres etc.
LO5	Harmonise the forms, needs and requirements of partnerships between families and nurseries/kindergartens in accordance with the facilitation and organisation of parents' meetings, case studies and discussions.
LO6	Build a sense of community by helping families feel comfortable talking with staff and educators and increasing family–educator collaboration in planning of quality outcomes for children.
LO7	Share insights and perspectives about each child and engage in shared decision making that correspond to children's needs, reflects to children's satisfaction and health
LO8	Observe the children's social environment socio-economic status and family (home) conditions from the position of a third person (researcher)

INDICATIVE CONTENT (LIST OF TOPICS TO BE COVERED) Detailed syllabus and Content annotation

- **Families and schools (kindergartens) as partners**

Family-school (KG)-community partnerships are a shared responsibility and reciprocal process whereby schools and other community agencies and organisations engage families in meaningful and culturally appropriate ways, and families take initiative to actively support their children's development and learning. Building effective partnerships with families requires that all school staff (administrators, teachers and support staff) create a school environment that welcomes parents and encourages them to ask questions, voice concerns and participate appropriately in decision-making. To build partnerships, it is also required to provide parents the information and training they need to participate and to be involved in their children's learning. Schools that are the most successful in supporting parents go beyond the traditional definitions of parental involvement in the broader sense of parents as full partners in their children's education

- **Successful approaches to family involvement in education**

Schools (kindergartens) that have successful partnerships with parents that view students' achievement as a shared accountability and all stakeholders, including parents, administrators, teachers, and the community leaders - play an important role in supporting children's learning. Family engagement is when families and educators, including teachers and administrators, partner together to share the responsibility of supporting a children's learning. Educators can connect families with opportunities to actively contribute to the school community, set learning goals, and create strong home learning environments. Families understand their child's needs, strengths, and areas of growth and use that understanding to inform the strategies educators use. Successful school-family partnerships require sustained mutual cooperation, support and participation of school staff and families at home and at school in activities that directly affect children's success in learning.

- **Effective partnerships**

First impressions of a setting are a decisive factor for parents. A positive response to their initial enquiry regarding the setting is the foundation to the partnership. All members of staff have a shared responsibility to ensure that the family is made to feel welcome on their first visit, given the time to look around and the opportunity to ask questions. All parents will feel slightly apprehensive on their first visit, practitioners must always be aware of this and endeavour to make the parents feel at ease. Effective partnership strategies vary from families to kindergarten communities and are most likely to be appropriate strategies for a given community depending on local inter-

ests, needs and resources. Nevertheless, successful approaches to promoting family participation in education their children share a common focus on innovation and resilience. The KG-family partnership begins by working with families to identify the strengths, interests, and needs of families, children, and KG staff and develop strategies that address the identified strengths, interests, and needs.

- **Communication between parents and practitioners**

Good communication between parents and practitioners is key to promoting children's learning and development by clarifying the roles and expectations of other persons. Effective communication between parents and all staff starts with positivity, trust and making parents feel valuable. Some parents may have specific needs in accessing information or participating in activities. Parents who have physical disabilities, sensory impairments, literacy difficulties, whose home language is different from that of the setting need information in an accessible form. Some parents may be shy or lack confidence, but with a little encouragement they may be happy to get involved. Building a successful KG-family partnership should be a whole-school effort, not the work of one person or programme.

- **Bridging differences**

Language and cultural differences as well as differences in educational attainment separating families and KG staff can make communication and family participation in preschool activities difficult. KG today works with a diverse group of parents, some of whom may not easily understand all of the written communications sent to them, and may see themselves as unprepared to help their children with homework or schoolwork. Strategies to address these differences include reaching out to parents with low formal education language differences through bilingual services for oral and internal communication, writing to families about school programmes and children's progress and publicising cultural understanding to build trust between home and school. Stakeholders also need to understand their own communities to select and tailor approaches to local needs. Developing effective partnerships in which parents feel welcome and valued are one of the most important key factors of cooperation.

- **Providing information and training to parents and educational staff**

Without the information and skills to communicate with each other, misunderstandings and mistrust can flourish between parents and educational staff. In fact, most parents and educational staff receive little training on how to work with each other. Through workshops and a variety of outreach activities (such as informational newsletters, handbooks, and home visits), these programs

teach parents and educational staff how to trust each other and work together to help children succeed in school. Their approaches include helping parents support learning at home, preparing parents to participate in KG decision-making, and providing teachers, principals and all staff with strategies for reaching parents and working with them as partners. These approaches share a common emphasis on training and information based on the needs and goals of families and staff, and focus on changing negative attitudes of parents and KG staff towards each other.

- **Preparing parents to participate in institutional decision-making**

Many programmes encourage parents to join formal committees that decide on curriculum policy, parent involvement activities, budgets and reform initiatives. In schools with school-based programs, administrators and teachers can play a crucial role in informing parents about the program and the policies to be followed. Schools themselves believe that parental involvement can provide important guidance on what they need to do to promote children's learning success and how schools can support learning difficulties arising from individual differences. Decision making refers to including parents in school decisions and to developing parent leaders and representatives. Parents participate in kindergarten decision making when they become part of KG governance committees or join organisations, such as the parent/teachers association.

- **Information and training for educational staff**

Some kindergartens offer teachers, principals and all staff information and strategies on how to reach parents and work together as partners. This can be particularly beneficial for educational staff, who generally have little or no training in these skills. In addition, changes in family structures and community life may require new or different family relationship strategies than have been effective in the past. Professional development activities may include telephone calls, home visits and other contact strategies, child home culture and diversity assessment, communication skills for parent-teacher conferences, and involving parents as leaders and decision-makers in KG. Specialised training for teachers and other educational staff can play a key role in dispelling some of the misconceptions and stereotypes that can become barriers to effective partnerships between parents and teachers.

- **Schools, families and family resource centres**

Family Resource Centres offer a range of support for families, including parenting classes, organising volunteering activities in KG, and providing families with information and ideas on how to help children with some curriculum-re-

lated activities. Some also provide families with services such as transportation and child care needed for families to participate in the centre's activities, as well as referrals for health, employment or housing needs. All operate under the guiding philosophy that schools and families need a broad range of support to educate children. The centres work closely with educational staff and parent-teacher organisations to sponsor family activities and facilitate home-schooling communication. They usually offer a comfortable place where parents can meet the teachers, and families can get information on child care referrals and scholarships, get advice on solving problems, use the homework centre and attend adult education classes.

- **Parents as partners in schoolwide restructuring**

Successful schools or KG involve parents as active partners in the school restructuring process. Rather than the traditional hierarchical relationship between families and schools/KG, where school staff make unilateral decisions, successful parent involvement seeks to develop parents as leaders and equal partners in the educational process. One way to do this is to create organisational structures for parental involvement, such as parent and volunteer committees. Parents can also participate in other decision-making committees, such as site leadership councils and school improvement groups. As members of these committees, parents can share ideas and help make decisions about budgets, hiring teachers and principals, institutional plans and educational policies related to parent involvement. Parents and staff members work together on reform initiatives to foster closer relationships between children, teachers and parents and improve child development.

- **Uses of school space for parents and families**

Schools can take simple steps to make parents feel comfortable. For example, posting a welcome sign or having a parent volunteer in the front hallway to greet visitors, sign in and direct them to classrooms or the office makes a much more reassuring first impression than a ubiquitous sign instructing visitors to "report to the office." Many schools have taken further steps to make their schools physically welcoming for parents. Unused classrooms have been converted into on-site family or parent centres, where parents can hold parent-teacher conferences, borrow books and other learning materials, run workshops, volunteer activities with other parents and educational staff.

- **Promoting cultural understanding**

Practitioners should respect diversity and be responsive to the cultures within their community. We live in a diverse and changing society. Young children's attitude towards diversity is affected by the behaviour of adults around them. All families must be valued and welcomed. Breaking the language barriers is a huge step towards increasing parents' participation in their children's edu-

cation, building bridges with families from different cultures and backgrounds also deserves special attention if all families feel comfortable participating in school activities. In many schools, a home-school liaison can play a key role in reaching out to parents from different backgrounds and building bridges between home and school. The home-school contact person closely identifies the community and shares the same cultural background as the parents; he or she is well placed to reach out to parents and invite them to participate in their children's education. Through the home-school relationship, schools can build relationships with parents based on understanding and trust.

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MODULE DETAILS	
Module Title	YOUNG CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS
Description of the Module	<p>The module's learning outcomes encompass understanding the characteristics and implications of various developmental disabilities, enabling educators to analyse and apply inclusive strategies for holistic child development. Ethical considerations and responsibilities in promoting inclusive practices and respecting children's rights are emphasised, preparing educators to address the unique needs of each child with sensitivity and compassion. The module also delves into challenges faced by educators and caregivers, proposing strategies for professional recognition and support systems to foster an inclusive and nurturing educational environment.</p> <p>Throughout the module, there is a strong emphasis on promoting gender equity and diversity, encouraging educators to create inclusive spaces that celebrate each child's unique identity. Moreover, the significance of individualised education plans (IEPs) is explored, equipping educators to provide personalised support tailored to each child's strengths and challenges. Collaboration with families and community partners is underscored as a vital component of effective special education, recognizing the integral role parents and caregivers play in a child's growth and development. The module encourages educators to actively engage with families and community organisations to provide comprehensive care and support for children with special needs.</p> <p>By highlighting the latest trends and innovations in special education, the module empowers educators to stay updated with evolving practices, integrating inclusive technologies and evidence-based teaching strategies. The adoption of strengths-based approaches and the promotion of social justice and equity are encouraged, fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment. The module also addresses the critical transition to primary education for children with special needs, providing strategies to facilitate this process seamlessly.</p> <p>Overall, this module equips educators with a holistic understanding of early childhood education, emphasising inclusivity, collaboration, and continuous professional development. By incorporating evidence-based practices and innovative approaches, educators are empowered to create an inclusive and nurturing learning experience that nurtures the potential of every child, setting them on a path to success in both academic and personal realms.</p>

MODULE LEARNING OUTCOMES (knowledge and skills)	
Upon successful completion of this module, the student will be able to:	
LO1	Understand the characteristics and implications of various developmental disabilities and special needs in early childhood.
LO2	Analyse and apply inclusive strategies to support the holistic development of children with special needs.
LO3	Identify the ethical considerations and responsibilities of early childhood educators in promoting inclusive practices and respecting children's rights.
LO4	Examine the challenges faced by early childhood educators and caregivers in providing inclusive education and propose strategies for promoting professional recognition and support systems.
LO5	Evaluate the impact of gender inequality within the early childhood education profession and propose strategies for promoting gender equity and diversity.
LO6	Participate in the development and implementation of Individualised Education Plans (IEPs), considering the unique strengths and challenges of children with special needs to provide individualised support.
LO7	Explore the role of professional unions and international organisations in advocating for the rights and well-being of early childhood professionals and shaping policies and practices in the field.
LO8	Facilitate effective communication and collaboration among professionals, demonstrating the ability to engage in regular meetings, share information, and coordinate efforts to support children with special needs effectively.
LO9	Resolve conflicts and address challenges collaboratively, utilising problem-solving skills to navigate potential conflicts and challenges that may arise within collaborative teams.

INDICATIVE CONTENT (LIST OF TOPICS TO BE COVERED) Detailed syllabus and content annotation

- **Introduction to special needs in early childhood education**

This topic provides an overview of special needs in early childhood, emphasising the importance of inclusive education. It covers the historical context, legal frameworks, and the significance of early intervention in supporting children with diverse needs. Through this topic, educators will gain a deep understanding of the concept and classification of special needs in early childhood, recognizing the unique challenges and opportunities these children present in their educational journey. Delving into the historical perspectives of special education for young children, the syllabus sheds light on the evolution of inclusive practices and the positive impact of a more holistic approach to learning.

A significant focus is placed on exploring the legal frameworks and policies that promote inclusive education in European countries. Understanding these policies becomes crucial in providing educators with a clear roadmap for creating inclusive environments that accommodate the diverse needs of their students. Additionally, the topic emphasises the importance of early intervention as a fundamental pillar in supporting children with special needs. By recognizing and addressing challenges at an early stage, educators can play a crucial role in fostering optimal development and improving outcomes for these young learners.

Definition and classification of special needs in early childhood. Historical perspectives on special education for young children. Legal frameworks and policies promoting inclusion in European countries. Benefits and challenges of inclusive education in the early years. Importance of collaboration between teachers, parents, and specialists.

- **Understanding developmental disabilities in early childhood**

This topic delves into various developmental disabilities prevalent in young children, exploring their characteristics and implications for learning and development. It equips educators with strategies to support children with specific disabilities effectively. By recognizing early signs and challenges, teachers can implement evidence-based strategies to provide individualised support, fostering an inclusive and empowering learning environment. Collaboration among educators and other professionals enhances comprehensive care for young learners with developmental disabilities, enabling them to reach their full potential and succeed academically and personally. Ultimately, this module emphasises inclusivity, empowering educators to create a nurturing environment that ensures every child thrives in their educational journey.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Intellectual Disabilities (ID). Speech and Language Disorders. Sensory Processing Disorders (SPD).

- **Breaking barriers of misdiagnosing roma children**

Roma children in Europe, including countries like Slovakia and post-communist nations, often face challenges in accessing quality education and are sometimes misdiagnosed as children with special needs. The Roma community is among the largest ethnic minority groups in Europe and frequently experiences discrimination and social exclusion, impacting their educational outcomes.

One of the main issues is the misattribution of academic difficulties to intellectual or developmental disabilities, leading to overdiagnosis of special needs in Roma children. Language barriers and cultural differences also contribute to the problem. To address this, a comprehensive approach is needed, including culturally sensitive education, teacher training in recognizing diverse needs, and policies that combat prejudice and promote inclusion. By fostering an inclusive environment, Europe can break the cycle of misdiagnosis and provide Roma children with fair and equitable educational opportunities for their academic and personal growth.

Discrimination and Social Exclusion. Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity. Recognizing and overcoming language barriers that can hinder effective communication. Combating stereotypes and prejudice against the Roma community. Ensuring equitable access to early childhood education. Teacher Training and Professional Development. Inclusive Curriculum. Parental Engagement and Involvement.

- **Assessment and early intervention strategies**

Effective assessment techniques and early intervention play a vital role in addressing special needs. This topic discusses formal and informal assessment methods and evidence-based intervention strategies tailored to young children. Module highlights the crucial role of effective assessment techniques and early intervention in addressing special needs in young children. It delves into formal and informal assessment methods, equipping educators with evidence-based intervention strategies tailored to meet the unique needs of each child.

The module covers various aspects, including screening and identification of special needs in early childhood, emphasising the importance of early detection to provide timely support. Educators will also explore the significance of Individualised Education Plans (IEPs) and Individualised Family Service

Plans (IFSPs) in tailoring education to each child's specific requirements. Evidence-based intervention approaches for diverse needs will be discussed, empowering teachers to implement targeted strategies that support children's development effectively. Additionally, the module explores the utilisation of technology in early intervention, enabling educators to leverage digital tools for enhanced learning experiences. Monitoring progress and adapting interventions as children grow and develop form essential components of the module, ensuring continuous support and progress for young learners with special needs. Overall, this module equips educators with a comprehensive toolkit to assess, intervene, and support children effectively, promoting their optimal growth and development.

Screening and identification of special needs in early childhood. Individualised Education Plans (IEPs) and Individualised Family Service Plans (IFSPs). Evidence-based intervention approaches for diverse needs. Utilising technology in early intervention. Monitoring progress and adapting interventions.

- **Creating Inclusive early childhood environments**

Creating Inclusive Early Childhood Environments is a fundamental pillar of special education, emphasising the importance of nurturing a welcoming and supportive atmosphere for all young learners. This area focuses on implementing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, which ensure that learning experiences are accessible and beneficial for children with diverse needs. Educators employ adaptations and modifications in the learning environment to accommodate different learning styles and abilities, fostering an inclusive and equitable space where every child can thrive. By employing differentiation strategies, teachers cater to the unique needs of each learner, promoting active engagement and participation in the classroom. Moreover, building a positive and accepting classroom culture is emphasised, where empathy, respect, and understanding are nurtured, creating a safe space for children to explore, learn, and grow together. By promoting social interactions and peer support, educators cultivate an inclusive community where children develop not only academically but also socially and emotionally, laying the foundation for their future success and well-being.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles. Adaptations and modifications in the learning environment. Differentiation strategies to accommodate diverse learners. Building positive and accepting classroom culture. Promoting social interactions and peer support.

- **Collaborating with families and community partners**

Engaging families and collaborating with community partners are crucial for addressing the needs of children with special needs effectively. This topic ex-

plores strategies to build strong partnerships and support networks. Collaborating with Families and Community Partners is a vital aspect of special education that recognizes the importance of building strong partnerships to support the needs of children with diverse requirements. This area emphasises family-centred practices in early childhood education, acknowledging the critical role of parents and caregivers in their child's development. Educators prioritise effective communication with families, fostering open and transparent dialogues to understand each child's unique strengths, challenges, and goals. By engaging families in the child's learning journey, educators create a supportive and collaborative approach that extends beyond the classroom walls.

Furthermore, this area explores strategies for collaborating with community organisations and support services to provide comprehensive care for children with special needs. By working in tandem with community partners, educators can access a wide range of resources and expertise to support the child's growth and development. Empowering families to advocate for their child's needs is also highlighted, ensuring that parents and caregivers are active participants in the educational decision-making process. Through effective collaboration with families and community partners, educators create a holistic and nurturing environment that fosters the optimal development of children with special needs. By aligning efforts across home, school, and community, educators can enhance the child's learning experience and well-being, providing a strong foundation for their future success and inclusion in society.

Family-centred practices in early childhood education. Effective communication with parents and caregivers. Engaging families in the child's learning journey. Collaborating with community organisations and support services. Empowering families to advocate for their children's needs.

- **Play-based learning for children with special needs**

Play is a powerful tool for learning and development. This topic explores the significance of play-based learning in supporting children with diverse needs, and how teachers can adapt play activities to meet individual requirements. Play-Based Learning for Children with Special Needs is a transformative approach that recognizes the power of play in supporting the holistic development of young learners with diverse needs. This specialised area of early childhood education highlights the significance of play as a valuable tool for learning and exploration. Educators implement various play activities that are adapted to meet the individual requirements of each child, ensuring their active engagement and participation. By recognizing the benefits of play for children with special needs, such as promoting social skills, communication, and sensory exploration, educators create a nurturing and inclusive play environment. Through structured and unstructured play activities, children de-

velop essential skills, build relationships with peers, and enhance their cognitive and motor abilities. Additionally, educators create sensory-friendly play spaces to cater to the sensory processing needs of children, fostering an environment that supports their overall well-being and learning. By embracing play-based learning, early childhood educators empower children with special needs to explore and express themselves, fostering a love for learning that will shape their educational journey and future success.

Benefits of play for children with special needs. Adapting toys and materials for inclusive play. Structured and unstructured play activities. Role of play in developing social skills and communication. Creating sensory-friendly play spaces.

- **Communication and language development in special education**

Communication skills are fundamental for children's overall growth. This topic explores language development and communication strategies for children with special needs. Communication and Language Development in Special Education is a fundamental aspect that underscores the significance of effective communication skills in a child's overall growth. This specialised field explores language development milestones in early childhood, empowering educators to enhance receptive and expressive language skills. Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems are implemented to support children with diverse needs in their communication journey. Educators utilise storytelling and language stimulation activities to encourage language development, while also promoting multilingualism in inclusive classrooms. By fostering strong communication skills, educators enable children with special needs to express themselves confidently, fostering their cognitive, social, and emotional development.

Language development milestones in early childhood. Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems. Strategies to enhance receptive and expressive language skills. Storytelling and language stimulation activities. Promoting multilingualism in inclusive classrooms.

- **Emotional and social development of children with special needs**

Supporting the emotional and social well-being of children with special needs is vital for their overall success. This topic delves into understanding and addressing the social-emotional needs of young learners. This specialised field emphasises the importance of supporting the social skills development and peer interactions of young learners with diverse needs. Educators implement strategies to promote emotional regulation and self-awareness, empowering children to effectively express and manage their emotions.

Building self-esteem and resilience in children with special needs is another key aspect, nurturing a positive sense of self and instilling confidence in their abilities. Educators employ evidence-based approaches to address challenging behaviours, providing a supportive and understanding environment where children feel safe to explore and learn.

Creating a nurturing and inclusive classroom environment is paramount, where children feel accepted and valued for who they are. By fostering positive relationships and encouraging peer support, educators cultivate a sense of belonging and social connectedness among all learners. Through this approach, children with special needs develop strong social skills, communication abilities, and emotional intelligence, which are essential for their overall development and future success in both academic and personal spheres. By prioritising the emotional and social well-being of children with special needs, educators pave the way for a more inclusive and compassionate society that embraces the uniqueness and potential of every individual.

Social skills development and peer interactions. Emotional regulation and self-awareness. Building self-esteem and resilience in children with special needs. Strategies for addressing challenging behaviours. Creating a supportive and nurturing classroom environment.

- **Assistive technology in early childhood education**

Assistive technology can significantly aid children with special needs in their learning journey. This topic explores various assistive technologies and their integration into early childhood classrooms. This area of special education focuses on the integration of various assistive technologies tailored to meet the individual requirements of each child. From augmented and virtual reality applications to mobile apps and devices, these technological tools offer innovative ways to enhance engagement and participation in the learning process. Educators utilise assistive technology to promote communication, motor skills, and cognitive development, creating a more inclusive and accessible learning environment. By harnessing the power of technology, early childhood educators can effectively cater to the unique abilities of children with special needs, unlocking their full potential and fostering a sense of independence and empowerment as they embark on their educational journey.

Types of assistive technologies for diverse needs. Augmented and virtual reality applications. Mobile apps and devices for children with special needs. Accessibility features in digital learning resources. Assessing the effectiveness of assistive technology tools.

- **Early literacy and numeracy for children with special needs**

Literacy and numeracy skills form the foundation for academic success. This topic focuses on adapting teaching strategies to promote early literacy and numeracy development in children with special needs. This specialised area of education focuses on adapting teaching strategies to promote early literacy and numeracy development, catering to the unique learning styles and abilities of each child. Educators employ evidence-based approaches, such as phonics and reading interventions, to foster language acquisition and reading comprehension. Similarly, hands-on activities and differentiated instruction are utilised to instil numeracy concepts, cultivating a strong mathematical foundation. By recognizing and addressing the specific challenges faced by children with special needs in these fundamental domains, educators empower them to engage actively in the learning process and build a solid basis for their future educational journey.

Phonics and reading interventions. Numeracy concepts and hands-on activities. Differentiated instruction in literacy and numeracy. Integrating literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. Supporting children with learning difficulties in literacy and numeracy.

- **Transitioning to primary education for children with special needs**

A smooth transition from early childhood education to primary school is critical for children with special needs. This topic explores strategies to facilitate this process and support children's successful integration. This crucial process focuses on ensuring a smooth and successful transition for young children with diverse needs from early childhood education to primary school. One prominent trend is the implementation of individualised transition plans for each child. These plans are tailored to address the specific requirements of the child, taking into account their strengths, challenges, and support needs during the transition period. By creating personalised plans, educators can better prepare children with special needs for the new academic and social environment, alleviating anxieties and ensuring a positive start to their primary education journey.

Collaboration between early childhood educators and primary teachers has emerged as a vital trend in facilitating successful transitions. Effective communication and sharing of information between the two educational phases ensure a continuity of support and a seamless handover of pertinent information about each child's progress and needs. This collaboration allows primary teachers to better understand the individual characteristics of children with special needs, enabling them to provide targeted support and differentiated instruction. Additionally, involving parents actively in the transition process is another significant trend. Parents' perspectives and insights into their

child's strengths and challenges are invaluable in developing comprehensive transition plans and ensuring a coordinated approach between home and school. By incorporating parental input, educators foster a sense of partnership and shared responsibility, which greatly benefits the child's overall adaptation and well-being in the primary education setting.

Individual transition plans for children with special needs. Collaboration between early childhood educators and primary teachers. Addressing anxiety and concerns during transitions. Involving parents in the transition process. Monitoring progress and providing ongoing support in primary education.

- **Current trends and innovations in special education**

This topic highlights the latest trends, innovations, and research in the field of special education for young children. It encourages educators to stay updated with the evolving practices.

Current trends and innovations in special education for young children aged 0-6 years are shaping the landscape of inclusive learning environments, providing educators with new tools and approaches to support their students with diverse needs. One prominent trend is the integration of inclusive technologies and educational apps, which offer interactive and personalised learning experiences. These technologies cater to the unique learning styles of children with special needs, promoting engagement and skill development. Additionally, ongoing research on effective teaching strategies for diverse learners is yielding valuable insights into differentiated instruction and individualised approaches. Educators are embracing these evidence-based practices to tailor their teaching methods to each child's strengths and challenges, fostering a more inclusive and supportive classroom atmosphere.

Another notable trend is the recognition of neurodiversity and the adoption of strengths-based approaches in early childhood education. Educators are moving away from deficit-based perspectives and, instead, focusing on identifying and nurturing the inherent strengths and talents of every child. By embracing the diverse abilities of their students, educators create empowering learning environments that foster self-confidence and positive self-identity. Moreover, there is a growing emphasis on integrating social justice and equity in special education practices for young children. Educators are actively promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion, ensuring that all children have equal access to opportunities and resources for optimal learning and development. These evolving trends in special education for young children are not only enriching their early educational experiences but also laying the foundation for a more inclusive and equitable society in the years to come.

Inclusive technologies and educational apps. Research on effective teaching strategies for diverse learners. Neurodiversity and strengths-based approaches in education. Integrating social justice and equity in special education. Inclusive policies and practices across European countries.

Resources

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