EDUCATION STANDARDS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Nurturing Professionalism in Services and Quality Learning for Young Children

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ISSA is a membership association, connecting professionals and organizations working in Early Childhood Development (ECD).

ISSA has a growing network of partners across the globe and members in more than 35 countries, primarily in Europe and Central Asia.

Fifteen years after it was established, ISSA continues to build upon the success of OSF's Step by Step Program and the vibrant network and movement resulting from it.

Through its programs, ISSA promotes and advocates for inclusive, quality care and education experiences for every young child.
ISSA Principles of Quality Pedagogy

The ISSA Principles are accompanied by a Resource Pack to support their application in practice.
ISSA Principles of Quality Pedagogy

• An international framework for early childhood systems, aiming to improve the quality of learning and children’s well-being, especially for those from vulnerable groups

• A policy framework defining child-centred quality pedagogy in services for children 3 to 10 years of age

• Are based on latest research on quality pedagogy, and aligned with international trends and policy documents

• Accompanied by instruments for building learning communities, improving teacher practices and guiding professional development policies
What Inspired the ISSA Principles

– ECERS (Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale)
– The DECET Principles
– NAEYC Early Childhood Programs Standards and Accreditation and Criteria
– Well-being and Involvement in Care Settings: A Process Oriented Self-evaluation Instrument
– CLASS: Classroom Assessment Scoring System Manual
– ACEI Global Guidelines for the Education and Care of Young children in the 21st Century

– ISSA’s previous resources and experience
– Latest and most relevant research on ECD
– International documents:
  • UNCRC
  • OECD Starting Strong Reports
  • Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Reference
The Framework:
7 Focus Areas, 20 Principles, 85 Indicators

ISSA’s Definition of Quality Pedagogy

Competent Educators of the 21st Century

Interactions
Interactions between adults and children, as well as peer interactions, are of key importance to supporting and influencing children’s social, emotional, and cognitive development and promoting their learning on an ongoing basis. The role of the teacher is to provide opportunities for children to engage in interactions, participate in processes to co-construct knowledge and meaning, and become self-confident learners and contributing and caring members of society.

Inclusion, Diversity, and the Value of Democracy
Promoting the right of every child and family to be included, respected, and valued; to participate; to work toward common goals; and to teach their full potential with a special focus on the most vulnerable is integral to quality pedagogy. The teacher serves as a model and assumes that through everyday experiences, children learn to appreciate and value diversity and develop the skills to participate as active citizens.

Teaching Strategies
Quality pedagogical process builds on the belief that care, learning, and nurturing form a coherent whole and that every child’s well-being and engagement are prerequisites for learning. While recognizing that learning happens in different ways and in diverse situations the teacher uses holistically planned, diverse and meaningful teaching strategies that promote active learning and are based on democratic values.

Learning Environment
The learning environment greatly influences children’s cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. By creating a physically and psychologically safe and stimulating environment, the teacher encourages children’s learning through independent and group exploration, play, access to diverse resources and interaction with other children and adults.

Family and Community
Strong partnerships among teachers, families, and other community members are essential for children’s learning and development. Recognizing the role of the home learning environment and family as the first educational and social setting of a child, the teacher is to build bridges between the school and family/community and to promote ongoing two-way communication.

Assessment and Planning
Quality pedagogy recognizes the role of assessment and planning in promoting the ongoing processes of learning that enable every child to succeed. The role of the teacher is to combine developmentally appropriate expectations, national requirements, freedom for creativity and exploration, and the interests and needs of individual children and groups of children into a cohesive framework.

Professional Development
Quality pedagogy is implemented by teachers who continually engage in ongoing professional and personal development, reflect on their practice, and work cooperatively with others modeling enjoyment of the process of lifelong learning and supporting each child’s development and learning.

www.issa.nl
Focus Areas of Teaching Practice

- Interactions
- Professional Development
- Learning Environment
- Teaching Strategies
- Assessment and Planning
- Inclusion, Diversity, and the Values of Democracy
- Family and Community

Outcomes for Children
ISSA’s Quality Resource Pack

Principles of Quality Pedagogy

Guidebook: Putting Knowledge into Practice
Illustration of how to incorporate the ISSA Principles into practice, backed up by research

Professional Development Tools
Concrete examples of different kinds of actions educators take at different levels of practice for each indicator of quality as a continuum

Online Video Library on Quality Pedagogy
Illustrate examples of practice with questions for reflection regarding different indicators that describe quality

Instrument for Assessing Quality Practices
Used to rate or assess educators’ practices on a selected group of indicators, for defining what additional professional development is needed to reach quality practice

Online Course for Kindergarten Teachers
Interactive 12-module course based on the ISSA Principles. Includes activities for self-reflection and online forums
The Reach of ISSA’s Principles

- Translated into **30 languages** in the ISSA network
- Inspired the development of **Professional Standards for Early Childhood Teachers** on country level
- Provided foundations for changing practices and curricula in **pre-service teacher training** on country level
- Provided foundations for changing the paradigm of **in-service teacher training** on country level
- Created a platform for **dialogue around the quality of services** among decision makers, researchers, practitioners and families
- Tool to advocate for **policies that nurture professionalism and quality learning** for young children especially those from vulnerable groups – early childhood curriculum, teacher training/professional development policies, parent involvement, community participation
Recent research carried out in the ISSA network (not published yet) shows that mentoring and group coaching are more effective in creating lasting changes in teacher’s practices than classic teacher training.

| Trainings – classic way of going wider – group approach | Mentoring – support and assistance for deeper understanding – individual approach | Building Learning Communities – setting the scene for continuous improvement of quality – individual approach supported by peer and group learning |
The Impact of ISSA’s Principles

The ISSA Principles (previously called Standards) were found to effectively influence:

• Individual teachers and their daily classroom practices

• Systems designed to prepare, improve and monitor teachers

• The development and institutionalization of new national education priorities, policies and practices.

Findings from the study:

ISSA Pedagogical Standards and their impact on ECD policies and practices in the region of ISSA’s network and beyond (2010)
Lessons Learnt – Development of Standards

• Backed by strong philosophy and research evidence
• Grounded in the national context
• Consistency with other policy documents
• Shared understanding of philosophy and outcomes
• Steps: drafting-reviewing, validating-reviewing
• Engage stakeholders in the development process
• Consider diversity of contexts: sensitive to inclusion
Lessons Learnt – Implementation of Standards

- Shared understanding
- Connect teacher training with ongoing monitoring
- Develop evaluation tools
- Train evaluators and those to be evaluated
- Establish/maintain reliability among evaluators
- Introduce tools and promote self-evaluation
- Innovative strategies to support teachers in practice
- Engage school administration/educational authorities
Further Reflections on Implementation of Standards

- Change does not happen simply by defining the standards
- Most important aspect = what happens in the classroom
- Standards ≠ static reality, they are a dynamic framework
- The culture of quality starts in pre-service training
- Risk: Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms may hinder quality improvement, if they are not seen as a support system
- Quality has to be nurtured from inside the services, not to be seen as a mechanism for checking upon services – create frameworks for professional discussions and reflections
- Quality depends on high professionalism!
Download the **ISSA Principles** in English, French, Russian and Spanish from the ISSA website: [www.issa.nl](http://www.issa.nl)

The **ISSA Principles and the accompanying Resources Pack** are available by contacting ISSA’s members.

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