



*Ideology vs. Reality – An Exploration of the Relationship between
Governance and Management, and Quality Early Childhood Care and
Education Provision*

by Rebecca Knox

Supervised by Dr. Mary Moloney

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Table of Contents

Contents	i
Acknowledgements	vi
Declaration	vii
Abstract	viii
List of Tables and Figures	ix
List of Abbreviations	x
List of Appendices	xii

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1	Context and Rationale.....	2
1.1.1	Complex System of Regulation and Inspection.....	3
1.1.2	Exposé of Shortcomings in ECCE Management.....	4
1.2	Research Question and Study Aims and Objectives.....	5
1.2.1	Personal Interest.....	7
1.3	Structure of Thesis.....	7

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Part 1

2.1	Introduction.....	9
2.1.2	Literature Search.....	10
2.2	Macro Level Governance.....	11
2.3	Competent Systems of Governance.....	13
2.4	The Origins of the ECCE Sector in Ireland.....	15
2.4.1	Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000-2006.....	15
2.4.2	Child Care Act 1991 and Associated Pre-School Services Regulations.....	16
2.4.3	Childcare (Preschool Services) Regulations 2006.....	17
2.4.4	Office of the Minister for Children.....	18
2.4.5	Free Pre-School Year Scheme 2010.....	18

2.4.6	Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2011.....	21
2.4.7	TUSLA – The Child and Family Agency 2014.....	22
2.4.8	Early Years Education-focused Inspections 2016.....	23
2.5	Juxtapositioning Ireland’s Macro-Governance within an International Context.....	26
2.5.1	Luxembourg.....	26
2.5.2	Sweden.....	27
	<i>Part 2</i>	
2.6	Introduction.....	29
2.7	Micro Governance.....	29
2.7.1	Corporate Governance.....	30
2.8	Expansion of the Management Role.....	31
2.8.1	Childcare (Preschool Services) Regulations.....	32
2.8.2	Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme.....	33
	2.8.2 (a) Administrative Burden.....	35
2.9	Breach of Trust.....	36
2.9.1	Hanafin Report 2014.....	37
2.10	Government Response to Breach of Trust.....	37
2.11	Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.....	39
2.11.1	Micro-level Setting Governance.....	41
2.12	Crèches Behind Closed Doors: Another Breach of Trust.....	43
2.12.1	Professional Regulation	43
2.13	National Childcare Scheme.....	45
2.14	Core Management Roles and Functions.....	46
2.14.1	Change Management.....	46
2.14.2	Implementing Legislation	47
2.14.3	Human Resource Management	48
2.15	Support for ECCE Managers.....	49
2.16	Challenges Associated with ECCE Management in Ireland.....	52
2.16.1	Financial Sustainability.....	52

2.16.2	Staffing Crisis.....	54
2.16.3	Absence of Management Training.....	55
2.17	Juxtapositioning Ireland’s Micro-Level Governance within an International Context.....	56
2.17.1	Australia.....	56
2.18	Conclusion.....	58

Chapter 3 – Research Methods and Study Design

3.1	Introduction.....	59
3.2	Research Paradigm.....	59
3.2.1	Ontology.....	60
3.2.2	Epistemology.....	60
3.2.3	Methodology.....	61
3.2.4	Axiology.....	62
3.3	Conceptual Framework.....	63
3.4	Data Collection.....	65
3.5	Sampling.....	67
3.5.1	Sampling Frame and Participant Selection.....	68
3.6	Data Analysis.....	69
3.7	Research Reliability and Validity.....	71
3.8	Researcher Reflexivity.....	72
3.9	Ethical Considerations.....	73
3.9.1	Domain 1 – Personal Values.....	74
3.9.2	Domain 2 – Participant Rights.....	74
3.10	Limitations.....	75
3.10.1	Sample Size.....	75
3.10.2	Time.....	76
3.10.3	Availability of Participants	76
3.11	Conclusion.....	77

Chapter 4 – Findings, Analysis and Discussion

4.1	Introduction.....	78
4.2	Pathway to Management.....	79
4.2.1	Diverse Pathways to Management.....	80
4.3	Micro-Setting Level Governance.....	83
4.3.1	Community-Based ECCE Service Governance.....	84
	4.3.1 (a) Challenges Associated with Boards of Management.....	86
4.3.2	Private ECCE Service Governance.....	88
4.3.3	Sources of Management Support.....	89
	4.3.3 (a) The County Childcare Committee.....	91
4.4	Core Management Responsibilities.....	93
4.4.1	Overarching Responsibility.....	94
4.4.2	Quality Early Childhood Care and Education Provision.....	95
4.4.3	Human Resource Management.....	98
	4.4.3 (a) Impact of Recruitment and Retention Crisis on HR Management.....	100
4.4.4	Regulatory Compliance.....	102
	4.4.4 (a) Impact of Administrative Burden on ECCE Management.....	103
4.4.5	Financial Management and Accountability.....	105
	4.4.5 (a) Relationship between Policy Demands and Financial Sustainability...	106
4.5	Core Management Knowledge and Skills.....	108
4.5.1	Change Management and the Chronosystem.....	108
4.5.2	ECCE Practice and Policy.....	110
4.5.3	Lack of Awareness of Core Knowledge and Skills.....	112
	4.5.3 (a) Financial Management.....	112
	4.5.3 (b) Human Resource Management.....	113
4.5.4	Potential Management Qualification/Training.....	115
	4.5.4 (a) Attitudes towards Management Training.....	115
	4.5.4 (b) Structure of Management Training.....	117
	4.5.4 (c) Learning on the Job.....	120
4.6	Attitudes toward Macro-Governance.....	123

4.6.1	Inspection.....	123
	4.6.1 (a) Enforcement Style.....	125
4.6.2	Macro to Micro Consultation.....	127
4.6.3	DCYA Funding Schemes.....	129
4.7	Conclusion.....	131

Chapter 5 – Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1	Introduction.....	133
5.2	Summary of Research Findings.....	134
5.2.1	Competent Management.....	134
5.2.2	Competent Management Structure.....	136
5.2.3	Competent ECCE System.....	137
5.3	Recommendation in Relation to Policy and Practice.....	139
5.4	Recommendation in Relation to Further Research.....	143
5.5	Conclusion.....	144

Bibliography	145
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Appendices	171
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Declaration

I declare that I have read and adhered to the MIC Academic Integrity Policy (available at Appendix F of the Student Handbook, (available at <https://www.mic.ul.ie/current-students/student-handbook>).

I hereby declare that this is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for any other awards at this or at any other academic establishment. Where use has been made of the work of other people, it has been fully acknowledged and referenced. I agree that this work will be scanned using plagiarism detection software and held on a database.

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Signed: 

Date: 19th September 2020

Abstract

This research study explores the relationship between governance and management and, quality provision within the early childhood care and education system. This unique study comes at a time of unprecedented change within the ECCE sector in Ireland, where managers are subjected to inordinate governance and management responsibilities from a multitude of State bodies. Although the past 25 years have seen significant developments in relation to national quality standards, qualifications, regulations and an early childhood curriculum, it is notable that there is still no statutory requirement for ECCE managers to hold any formal qualification to support them in providing quality ECCE provision. Given the shortcomings in management practices highlighted by two RTE investigations, *Breach of Trust* (2013) and *Crèches Behind Closed Doors* (2019), this study questions why ECCE policy has consistently ignored the need for competent managers who hold the essential skills or knowledge to effectively manage an ECCE service at micro-setting level.

The present study uses an ecological lens to examine ECCE governance across three domains: macro-governance; government departments that hold responsibility for the ECCE sector, meso-governance; POBAL, TUSLA, and the Dept. of Education and Skills (agents of the State) and micro-governance; ECCE managers within services. This qualitative research study involved 15 interviews with key stakeholders in the ECCE sector including ECCE service managers at micro-setting level and County Childcare Committee and Membership Organisation representatives at meso-support level. These participants highlight the multiple, onerous management and governance responsibilities, as well as providing insight into the challenges of being an ECCE manager working within a complex policy landscape.

Overall, the findings highlight how the macro-governance of the ECCE sector, split between the DCYA and the DES, dictates the roles and responsibilities of micro-level ECCE managers thus, significantly impacting their role and their ability to provide a quality ECCE service. Likewise, at micro-level practice, the managers knowledge and skillset too, determines their capacity to carry out these core roles and responsibilities that are essential to the development of a quality ECCE service. In light of these findings, the researcher recommends various measures for the provision of competent managers, competent management structures and a competent system of ECCE governance.

List of Tables and Figures

Figures

Figure 1	Overview of Shifts in Responsibility for ECCE between 1996 and 2020.....	12
Figure 2	Government Departments Sharing Responsibility for ECCE over the past two decades.....	13
Figure 3	Layers of Competency within ECCE Systems.....	13
Figure 4	Interconnected Dimensions of Reciprocal Relationships in a Competent System.....	14
Figure 5	Functions of the DCYA.....	21
Figure 6	Areas of Quality within the Early Years Education-Focused Inspection Framework.....	24
Figure 7	Overview of Policy Development relative to ECCE Management and Governance.....	31
Figure 8	Management Presence in the ECCE Sector.....	34
Figure 9	Areas of Regulatory Inspection under the Early Years Services Regulations 2016.....	40
Figure 10	Core Aspects of Effective Management.....	47
Figure 11	Overview of Regulatory Regime.....	50
Figure 12	Management requirements under Regulation 9 Management and Staffing.....	55
Figure 13	Overview of Layers of Influence in Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory.....	63
Figure 14	Population of Interest.....	67
Figure 15	Selection of ECCE Services.....	68
Figure 16	Triangulation of Research Data.....	72

Tables

Table 1	Pre-School Quality Agenda.....	38
Table 2	Essential Programme Content for Professional Awards in ECCE relative to Management.....	49
Table 3	Overview of Interviews Undertaken.....	66
Table 4	Braun and Clarke’s 6 Step Framework for Thematic Analysis.....	70
Table 5	Grouping of Codes to Generate Themes.....	71
Table 6	Overview of Management Experience.....	79
Table 7	Support available to ECCE Managers.....	92
Table 8	Suggested Management Qualification.....	118

List of Abbreviations

ADM	Area Development Management
ACECQA	Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority
BoM	Board of Management
CCC	County Childcare Committee
CECDE	Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CRA	Children’s Rights Alliance
DCDEI	Department of Children, Disability Equality and Integration
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DHC	Department of Health and Children
DJELR	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
DoH	Department of Health
DfE	Department for Education
ECI	Earl Childhood Ireland
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
EHO	Environmental Health Officer
EPPE	Effective Provision of Pre-School Education
EOCP	Equal Opportunity Childcare Programme
EYEI	Early Years Education-focused Inspections
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Profit
HSE	Health Service Executive
MO	Membership Organisation
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCS	National Childcare Scheme

NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NQF	National Quality Framework (Australia)
NVB	National Vetting Bureau
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development
OMC	Office of the Minister for Children
OMCYA	Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs
PACG	Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines for Initial Professional Education (Level 7 and Level 8) Degree Programmes for the Early Learning and Care (ELC) Sector
PHN	Public Health Nurse
PIP	Programme Implementation Platform
QQI	Quality & Qualifications Ireland
QRF	Quality and Regulatory Framework
RTÉ	Raidió Teilifís Éireann

List of Appendices

APPENDIX 1	Participant Information Letter
APPENDIX 2	Informed Consent Form
APPENDIX 3	Interview Questions
APPENDIX 4	Evidence of Data Analysis
APPENDIX 5	Definitions of Terms
APPENDIX 6	National Framework of Qualifications and Quality and Qualifications Ireland
APPENDIX 7	Early Years Education Focused Inspections (EYEI)
APPENDIX 8	Comparison of Notification and Registration requirements from 1996 and 2013
APPENDIX 9	Governance in practice under the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016
APPENDIX 10	ECCE Funding Scheme Compliance
APPENDIX 11	Competent Systems
APPENDIX 12	Luxembourg System of ECCE
APPENDIX 13	Comparison of Regulations from 1996 and 2006
APPENDIX 14	Comparison of regulations associated with children's Health, Welfare and Development of the Child from 2006 and 2016
APPENDIX 15	Development of managerial roles and governance responsibilities in line with regulatory and legislative development
APPENDIX 16	Staff behaviours achieved through “effective management”
APPENDIX 17	Legislative Requirements under the National Quality Framework
APPENDIX 18	Literature Input Table

Chapter 1

Introduction

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) refers to “all arrangements providing care and education for children under compulsory school age, regardless of setting, funding, opening hours, or programme content” (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), 2001, p.14). According to Heckman (2008) investment in children’s earliest years (birth to six years) lays the foundations for lifelong learning, and yields significant benefits in terms of social cohesion, educational attainment and economic prosperity. However, provision must be of high quality (Ibid.). In Ireland, an increasing demand for ECCE provision and growing awareness of its benefits has resulted in a myriad of policy responses throughout the past twenty years. While the quality of ECCE is underpinned by the quality of staff working directly with children in services (OECD 2006), the quality, skills and effectiveness of the early childhood manager, is equally important (Moloney and Pettersen 2017; Moyles 2006). Indeed, Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, and Tagart (2004) suggest that the higher the qualifications of ECCE managers, the richer the curriculum experiences, and relationships with and between staff and parents.

Drawing upon Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (1979), Moloney and Pettersen (2017, p.85), suggest that in the field of ECCE, “management occurs within an ecological framework” where the manager works within and across multiple ecosystems. For example, within the microsystem, the manager works with children, parents and staff while also implementing various macro-level policies and facilitating multiple inspections from multiple State organisations (Ibid.). The present study uses an ecological lens to examine ECCE governance across three domains: macro-governance; government departments that hold responsibility for the ECCE sector, meso-governance; POBAL, TUSLA, and the Dept. of Education and Skills (agents of the State) and micro-governance; ECCE managers within services. At setting level, Moloney and Pettersen (2017) indicate the ECCE manager holds the key to translating and implementing policy in practice. Therefore, this study explores the relationship between governance and management and, quality provision within the context of Ireland’s early childhood care and education system.

1.1 Context and Rationale

Reflecting upon the rapid development of macro level policies and legislation relating to ECCE in Ireland, Walsh (2018) suggests that “early childhood education is rapidly finding its feet” (p.83). In fact, the sector has undergone phenomenal change over the past two decades, including the introduction of the Childcare (Pre-school Services) Regulations, 1996, two practice Frameworks: *Siolta; the National Quality Framework* (Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE) 2006) and, *Aistear; the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) 2009). Other significant changes relate to: the revision of the Childcare (Pre-school Services) Regulations in 1996, 2006 and 2016, the establishment of a childcare infrastructure through the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP) 2006-2010, the introduction of the Free Pre-School Year Scheme in 2010, the establishment of TUSLA – The Child and Family Agency in 2014 and, the National Childcare Scheme (NCS), in 2019. All of these policy initiatives have served to determine the roles and responsibilities of the ECCE manager, while also altering the practice landscape within which they operate.

Urban, Vandebroek, Van Laere, Lazzari, and Peeters 2011; 2012) introduced the notion of a competent system, whereby they identify the key aspects including leadership and co-ordination at macro-government level, unified monitoring and evaluation systems, and appropriate working conditions. Against the backdrop of the *CoRe Report* (Urban et al. 2011; 2012), this study argues that the Irish Government currently oversees an incompetent system of ECCE, within which for example, staff are undervalued, poorly paid, overworked, and disparaged by precarious contracts and poor working conditions (Moloney 2019a; SIPTU 2019b). Since its inception in 2000, various government departments have shared responsibility for the ECCE sector in Ireland. Ireland is therefore characterised by a split system of ECCE, with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) holding responsibility for children from birth to six years (before school) and the Department of Education and Skills (DES) responsible for children attending primary school from age five approximately. However, as discussed later in this chapter, the DES inspect the education component of the Early Childhood Care and Education scheme introduced by the Irish government in 2010. Clearly, the sector is highly fragmented across care and education, which directly affects micro-level setting governance and management.

Much research points to the inextricable link between management and quality provision (OECD 2012; Rodd 2013; Sylva et al., 2010, Sylva et al., 2004, Urban et al. 2011; 2012; Urban 2014), with Moloney and Pettersen (2017) claiming that the manager is the lynchpin of quality and the one who holds it all together. As stated, macro-level governance determines the policy direction for ECCE, which in turn, determines the roles and responsibilities of ECCE managers. However, it is apparent that in relation to Ireland, this policy trajectory has focused upon the creation and renewal of regulations, the establishment of curricular and quality frameworks, qualification requirements in accordance with the Early Years Services Regulations 2016 and the DCYA funded schemes, and access and affordability for parents within the NCS. Therefore, the need for a competent system of management and governance at micro-setting level, involving qualification requirements, in-service training and mentoring support for managers, have been completely overlooked by policy makers since 1996. Consequently, while there is a perception that anybody can manage an ECCE service, Moloney and Pettersen (2017) suggest that managing an ECCE service is highly complex, requiring considerable knowledge and skill.

1.1.1 Complex System of Regulation and Inspection

The unequivocal relationship between quality and regulatory standards features prominently across the literature (e.g., Baldock 2013; Gormley 1999; National Research Council 2001). The OECD (2018, p.3) describe regulations as the “rules of the game”. Thus, they are the cornerstone of quality ECCE provision, providing a floor for quality standards (Moloney, 2014a; 2014b; National Research Council 2001;). Moreover, Gormley (1999) stresses that “child care quality depends on child care regulation, as plants depend on water” (p.116), and in common with Moloney (2014a) suggests that the sole purpose of regulations is to promote children’s protection and welfare, and safeguard them from harm.

Initial regulations for the ECCE sector in Ireland, the Childcare (Pre-school Services) Regulations, were developed in 1996 and implemented by the then Health Boards, which transferred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) in 2005, and then to TUSLA, the Child and Family Agency in 2014. Due to the involvement of different actors at macro-level, a complex system of regulation and inspection currently exists in Ireland. This involves the Early Years Education Policy Unit of the DES, which monitors educational provision for children availing of the universal ECCE scheme, and the Early

Years Division of the Dept. Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), which up to June 2020, held overall responsibility for the ECCE sector.

In 2016, the DCYA published the Early Years Services Regulations 2016, currently enforced by TUSLA. Commenting upon the involvement of two Government Departments in inspecting different aspects of ECCE provision, Moloney (2018a) suggests that it is a case of those working in the sector being accountable to two masters: the DES and, the DCYA. She further argues that the differing expectations and approaches to inspection across departments create a confusing practice landscape for ECCE managers. Accordingly, increasing accountability pressures resulting from multiple inspections seriously impede managers in their role at micro-setting level (Ibid.). The European Commission (2014) consider that such division in monitoring and evaluation weakens high quality provision due to the complicated and fragmented nature of administrative responsibilities. Similarly, Moloney (2015a; 2015b) illustrates how, in spite of their positive and imperative contribution to quality provision within ECCE services, the split in regulatory and legislative oversight across the DCYA and the DES further accentuates the care/education divide in an Irish context, providing for further fragmentation and confusion regarding sectoral governance.

1.1.2 Exposé of Shortcomings in ECCE Management

As mentioned, ECCE has experienced unprecedented changes in its policy and practice landscape throughout the past decade. While these changes have altered the manager's roles and responsibilities, as discussed throughout this dissertation, the Early Years Services Regulations 2016 (Govt. of Ireland, 2016) have had the most significant influence in this regard. These regulations place a significant focus upon how ECCE services are governed and managed, thus creating a link between these domains and quality provision. According to Moloney and Pettersen (2017), the 2016 regulations place an unprecedented onus upon managers, many of whom are not supported to translate and implement policy, nor are they equipped for their complex management role.

As previously mentioned, shortcomings in management practices have been highlighted by two RTÉ investigations, *Breach of Trust* (2013) and *Crèches Behind Closed Doors* (2019) both of which highlighted weaknesses in macro-level governance, and micro-setting level, which directly impacts the care and education of young children. Both investigations publicly exposed ECCE managers who blatantly disregarded children's

health and safety. In both instances, ECCE managers and staff inflicted psychological and physical abuse upon young children. In addition, mandated adult: child ratios were breached. For example, regardless of the mandated ratio of one adult to three babies (Govt. of Ireland 2016), *Crèches Behind Closed Doors* revealed that in one of the services at the centre of the investigation, one adult was left to care single-handedly for 18 babies.

The investigations also exposed major anomalies at macro-level governance. *Breach of Trust* (2013), for instance, raised significant questions about the capacity of State inspectors and the effectiveness of the inspection system. Accordingly, it was revealed that the rate of national inspection was low and inconsistent. Just 55% of Ireland's total services were inspected in 2012, with fluctuation of rates across counties, ranging from 19% in some counties to 95% in others (Moloney 2014a). In addition, just one month previous to the national exposé, inspectors observed a child-centred and homely environment in the service at the centre of the documentary (Ibid.). The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs at the time, Frances Fitzgerald T.D, acknowledged these shortcomings, suggesting the need “to develop a new national inspection system” (Fitzgerald 2013b, online), which was established in 2017 (Walsh 2018). However, serious questions relating to macro-level governance emerged yet again following revelations in the 2019 investigation. Once again, amid revelations that one service (part of the chain under investigation) remained unregistered with TUSLA for a period of 14 months, rendering them exempt from inspection, the effectiveness of the inspection system became the focus of attention. Both investigations therefore shone a light on considerable issues with the macro-level, meso-level and micro-level ECCE governance.

1.2 Research Question, Study Aims and Objectives

The present study explores the historical Governance trajectory at a macro-Government level, beginning in 1996. The core research question asks; What is the relationship between Governance and Management and Quality in Early Childhood Care and Education provision? The following embedded questions are especially pertinent:

- What are the key roles and responsibilities of an ECCE manager?
- What are the essential knowledge and skills required of an ECCE manager?

- To what extent is an ECCE manager prepared for changing roles and responsibilities under the Early Years Services Regulations, 2016?
- What has the greatest impact on how an ECCE manager governs/manages an early years service?
- What supports are currently available to an ECCE manager to enable them to govern/manage an early years service?
- What supports are required by an ECCE managers to govern/ manage an early years service?

The study seeks to determine how the ever-changing macro-governance context affects micro-level ECCE management practice. It further seeks to explore how policy directives emanating from Government departments between 1996 and 2020 influence the expansion of the ECCE manager’s roles and responsibilities at micro-setting level. In 1996 for example, the Childcare (Preschool Services) Regulations (Department of Health (DoH) 1996), required the manager to simply notify the Health Boards of their intention to open an ECCE service. While the regulations stipulated the need for a “competent adult” (Ibid. p.11) to work with children in an ECCE service, the manager’s role was overlooked both in terms of qualifications and competencies. A similar situation prevailed with the introduction of the Childcare (Pre-school Services) Regulations, 2006, which recommended that at least 50% of staff should hold a relevant qualification. Again, however, the 2006 regulations overlooked management qualifications and competencies. Following twenty years of turbulence in the ECCE sector as alluded to in this chapter, the publication of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 significantly altered the role of the ECCE manager from a policy and practice perspective. As such, the Early Years Services Regulations, 2016 require that a “clear management structure” must be in place in each ECCE service (Govt. of Ireland 2016, p.12). Other requirements relating to mandatory qualifications for ECCE staff, a rigorous registration process and significant recruitment responsibilities point to a much extended and complex management role. Moreover, the manager’s role has, in recent years, extended beyond regulatory compliance, to compliance with the rules associated with the various ECCE funding schemes developed by the DCYA down through the years.

However, what is common across all legislative and regulatory publications, is the lack of policy attention on the critical role of the manager in strengthening and upholding the quality of ECCE provision. Crucially, notwithstanding the complexity of the

management role, there is still no requirement for an ECCE manager to hold a qualification. In both a UK (Preston 2013) and an Irish context (Moloney and Pettersen 2017), it is thought that many managers assume their role by default as they had never intended to take on the managerial role upon taking up employment in the sector. Given the lack of training and support for managers in Ireland, Moloney and Pettersen (2017) suggest that managers tend to perfect their roles and responsibilities by learning on the job. In some instances, management is accidental rather than deliberate (Ibid.). This study queries how, in the absence of training or support, managers ensure quality provision as demanded within the ECCE policy landscape in Ireland.

1.2.1 Personal Interest

While undertaking professional practice placements as part of her undergraduate degree in ECCE, the researcher observed first-hand, the importance of management, and the contribution made by qualifications and training to the provision of quality ECCE. Upon obtaining employment in the sector following graduation, she again observed the difficulties experienced by an ECCE manager because of the split system of macro-governance. In addition, the aforementioned documentaries *Breach of Trust* (2013) and *Crèches Behind Closed Doors* (2019) raised awareness of the damning effects of poor-quality management and governance practices.

For these reasons, the researcher identified a gap in existing research relating to governance and management of ECCE services in an Irish context. The present study therefore explores the interaction between ECCE policy and management practices at setting level in the ECCE sector in Ireland.

1.3 Structure of Thesis

In addition to Chapter One, the remainder of this research thesis comprises the following four chapters:

Chapter Two presents the literature review in two inter-connected sections. *Part 1* examines the macro-government departments that hold responsibility for the ECCE sector in Ireland, while *Part 2* focuses specifically on micro governance in terms of the management of ECCE services. It draws on the concept of a competent ECCE system, which outlines how macro-level governance is imperative for the effective development

of all other aspects of ECCE including micro-level management, and is essential for building a competent and quality driven ECCE system (Urban et al. 2011; 2012). Overall, Chapter Two illustrates the relationship between macro-level Governance and micro-level management practices within ECCE services.

Chapter Three provides an in-depth discussion of the research paradigm and methodology utilized in this study. It provides the rationale for undertaking a qualitative study and discusses sampling techniques, and participant selection. This chapter provides detail of ethical considerations and sets out the steps taken to minimise risk. Furthermore, it provides an in-depth discussion of how the primary research data was analysed, along with measures to ensure research validity and reliability, and researcher reflexivity. Finally, Chapter Three identifies the limitations of the research study.

Chapter Four presents the research findings, which are presented as a series of themes, namely, the manager's pathway to management, differing structures of micro-setting governance, core responsibilities of an ECCE manager, core knowledge and skills required by an ECCE manager, and manager's attitudes to current macro-governance of the ECCE sector. These themes are located within and discussed against the backdrop of Chapter Two, the Literature Review.

The final chapter of this study, Chapter Five, summarises the research findings and accordingly, presents a series of recommendations for policy, practice and further research. Overall, these recommendations call for the establishment of competent managers, competent management structures and a competent system of macro-level governance, as well as further research into the area of micro-level ECCE service governance and management.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Part 1

2.1 Introduction

As discussed in *Chapter One*, this study explores the relationship between governance and management and, quality provision within the ECCE sector. This chapter therefore illustrates how Ireland's complex macro-governance structure has a significant impact on micro-level governance in ECCE services. Consequently, Chapter Two comprises two overlapping sections. *Part 1* therefore, focusses specifically upon the various government departments that hold responsibility for Ireland's ECCE sector, determining macro-level governance and, by extension, influencing micro-level governance within services. Through an exploration of the literature, *Part 1* firstly explores the many definitions of macro-governance. Drawing upon Urban et al. (2011; 2012), it then discusses competent ECCE systems before moving on to explore the Irish policy context. Against the backdrop of Ireland's turbulent history of macro-level governance since the establishment of the ECCE sector in 2000, *Part 1* questions the extent to which a competent system of macro-governance currently exists in Ireland.

Part 2 focuses specifically on micro-level governance in terms of micro-level setting management, discussing how Ireland's macro-level governance affects governance at this micro level. It explores the expansion of the manager's roles and responsibilities in tandem with policy developments over the past 25 years. In looking at policy developments down through the years and how they have delineated the management role, *Part 2* further questions the extent to which managers are prepared for their roles and responsibilities and, the extent to which they are supported by the State.

2.1.2 Literature Search

The purpose of the literature search is to identify information relevant to one's research topic, and to document how the research topic adds to existing research (Booth, Papaioannou and Sutton 2012; Creswell 2019). According to Hart (2012), two core areas of literature must be searched: literature relevant to the research topic, and literature pertaining to research methodology and data collection techniques. Indeed, the process of literature searching is a time-consuming process, taking up to 6 months to undertake a comprehensive and rigorous search (Ibid.).

In order to search for relevant literature in the present study, the researcher identified key terms relative to the research question, such as 'quality early childhood care and education', 'early childhood care and education management', 'governance of early years services', and 'early childhood care and education policy' in order to locate relevant research material. Given the COVID-19 global pandemic, and the immediate closure of all 3rd level institutions and libraries across Ireland on March 12th, access and availability of physical literature was compromised. Therefore, the use of electronic sources of literature was paramount to the literature search and review. Electronic books, journals, online reports, research articles, conference proceedings, media sources, government documents and unpublished theses were utilised throughout the course of this literature review. Manual searches were undertaken of relevant electronic journals, including for example, the '*Journal of Early Childhood Research*', the '*Journal of Early Childhood Education Research*', the '*Journal of Educational Research*', and the '*International Journal of Early Childhood*'. The researcher utilized multiple online databases and search engines, such as the Mary Immaculate College Library (www.mic.ul.ie/library), Google Scholar (www.scholar.google.com/), Google (www.google.ie), Sage Journals (<https://journals.sagepub.com/>), and Taylor and Francis Online (<https://www.tandfonline.com/>).

However, while some sources proved useful, overall, there is a dearth of available research relating to governance and management in the context of early childhood care and education, what governance and management means at setting level and, its contribution to enhancing quality ECCE provision. Therefore, Moloney and Pettersen's (2017) book was widely used throughout this thesis. This book, entitled *Early Childhood Education Management: Insights into Business Practice and Leadership* and based upon primary research with ECCE managers in Ireland, is especially relevant,

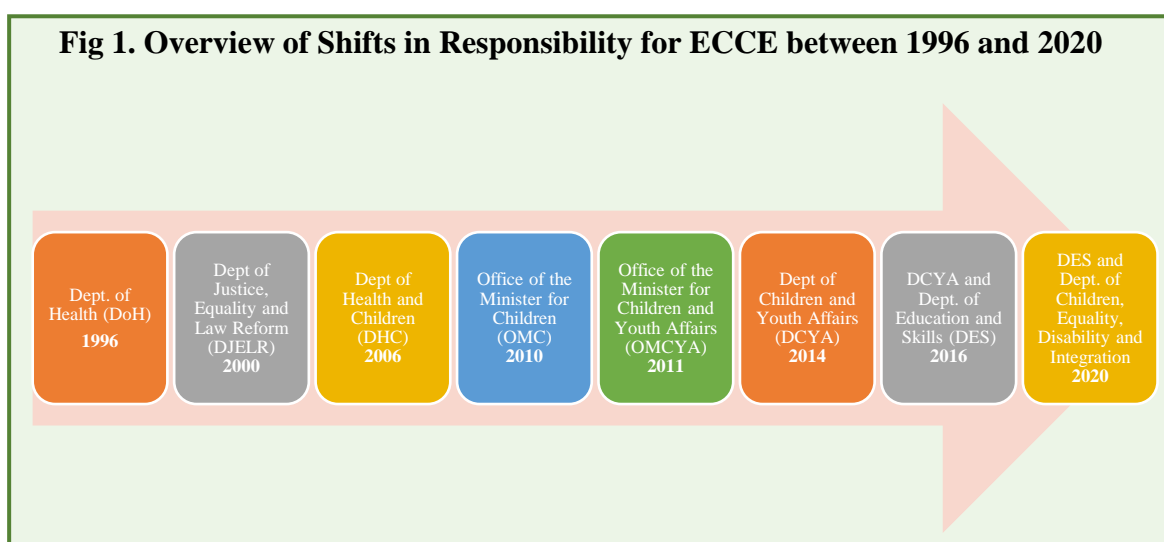
relating specifically to micro-level governance and management of ECCE services in the Irish context. The researcher also searched for literature pertaining to ECCE management and governance outside Ireland. Many OECD publications (2001; 2004; 2006; 2012; 2015; 2017; 2019a; 2019b) yielded useful data pertaining to micro and macro-level ECCE across various international jurisdictions. In addition, where a particular author is prolific in the area of research, author searches were conducted (Booth et al. 2012). For example, literature by Dr. Mary Moloney, Professor Nóirín Hayes and Professor Mathias Urban are specific to the areas of macro-level ECCE governance, micro-level ECCE management and ECCE policy in Ireland, and therefore merit inclusion in the study. The researcher also undertook bibliographic searches by examining the reference list of relevant literature to locate other pertinent literature for inclusion in the study. For example, a bibliographic search of Moloney and Pettersen's (2017) book led the researcher to source additional relevant literature, such as Newstead and Isles-Buck (2019) book: *Essential Skills for Managers of Child-Centred Settings* which provides insight into the UK context of ECCE, and the core skills required by ECCE service managers. The researcher documented the entire literature search process through literature input tables (see appendix 18 for a sample table).

2.2 Macro Level Governance

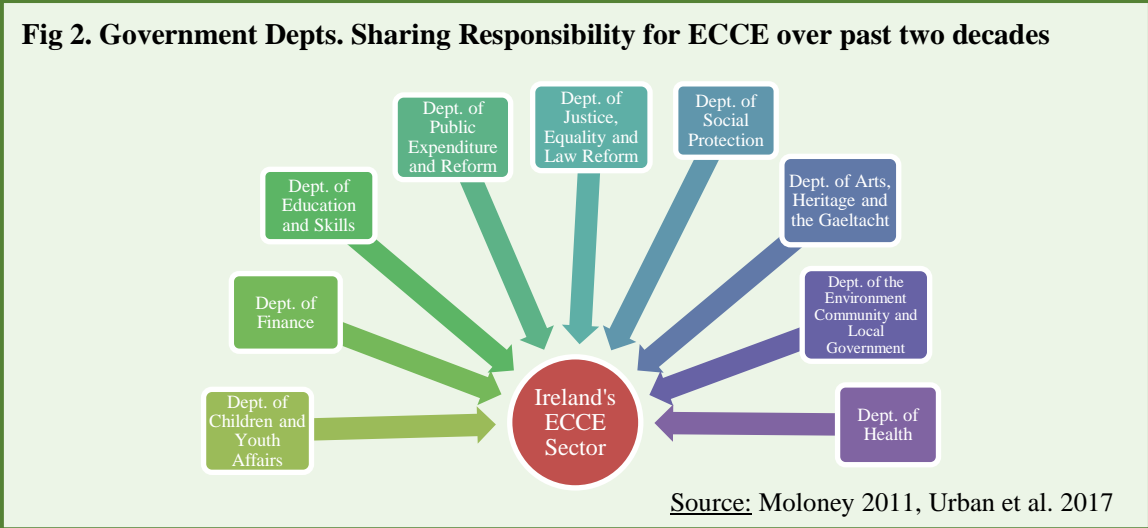
The concept and definition of governance is multi-faceted due to the multitude of contexts in which it exists. In relation to ECCE services, Bennett (2011) indicates that governance is organised either at an integrated level (under the auspices of a single department) or, it shares divided responsibility. According to Kamerman (2000), responsibility for ECCE at macro-department level is determined by its perceived nature i.e. educational/social service/family affairs/health and is described as “administrative auspices” (p.11). Likewise, Britto, Park, Yoshikawa, Ravens and Ponguta et al., (2013) describe governance as “the process of allocating responsibility [for ECCE services] within and across levels of government” (p.14). Allocating responsibility is just one aspect of Governance however, as Urban, Robson and Scacchi (2017) associate it with the “establishment of policies, and continuous monitoring of their proper implementation, by the members of the governing body of an organisation” (p.19). Likewise, Neuman (2005) asserts that governance determines whether services are consistent in quality and affordability, ensuring coherence in policy-making.

Governance, therefore, makes a powerful contribution to ECCE systems (Neuman, 2005).

Overall, it seems that macro-level governance is associated with various government departments holding responsibility for and, being accountable for the delivery of and, the quality ECCE services within a given country. Although governance can be shared across departments, it is evident that in the Irish context, the ECCE sector has moved from pillar to post as responsibility has shifted from one government department to the next between 1996 and 2020 (see Figure 1). While formal education (primary school) rests with a single Government department, Figure 1 illustrates how ECCE has been under the auspices of multiple departments since the introduction of the Childcare (Pre-school services) Regulations 1996. Thus, signifying the historic split system of care and education in Ireland (Kaga, Bennett and Moss, 2010).



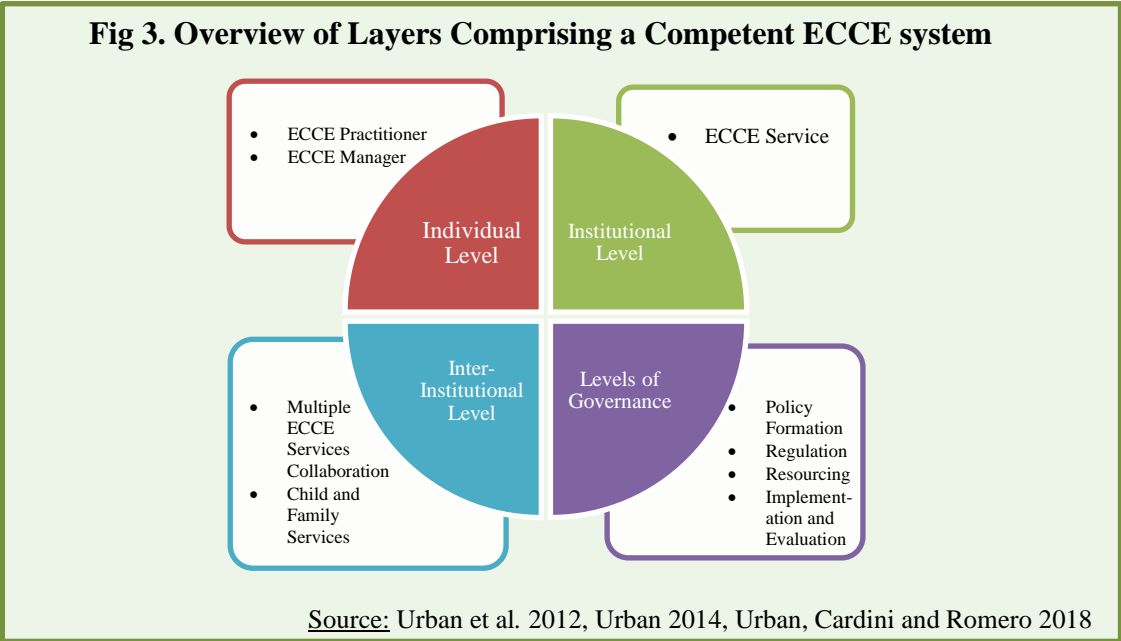
In addition to the ongoing departmental flux, throughout the past two decades, as indicated in figure 1, no less than nine government departments held different levels of responsibility for ECCE, further underscoring considerable fragmentation at macro-level down through the years. As illustrated in Figure 2, not only has there been a split system of care and education from the beginning, a fractured system of macro-level governance has resulted in mixed messaging, as discussed throughout this chapter.



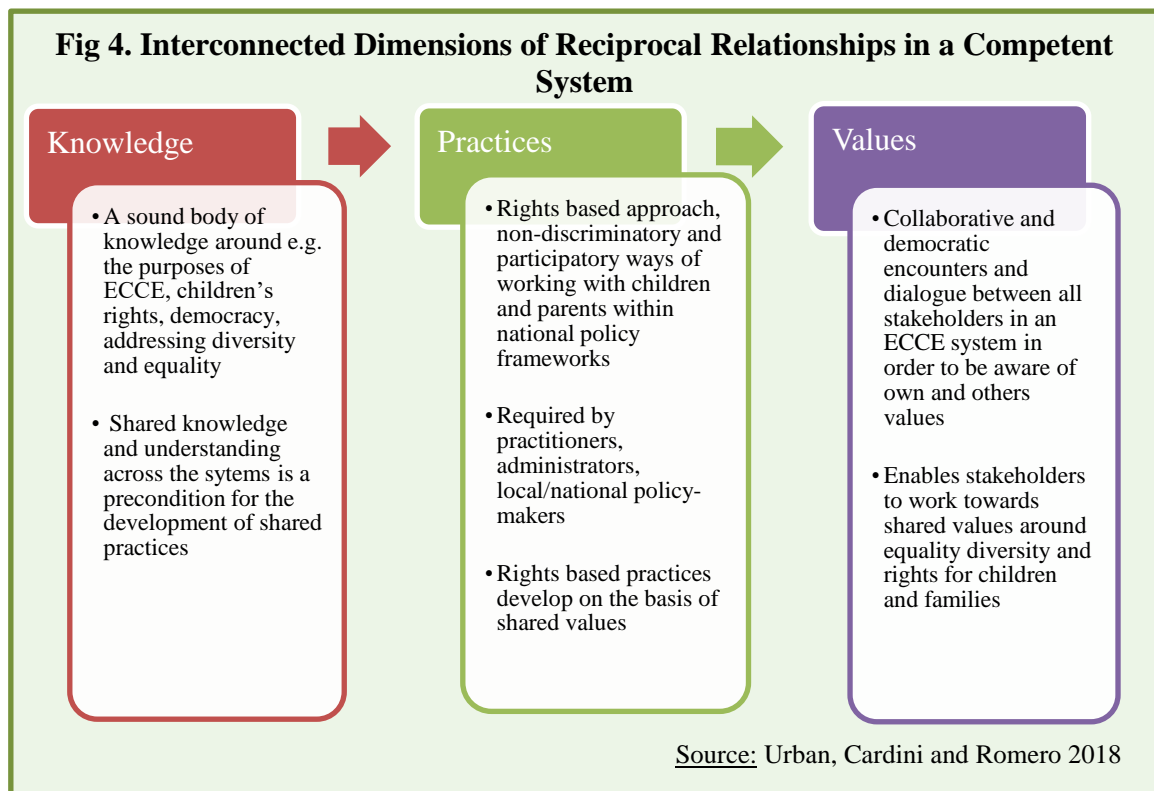
Such fragmentation and confusion are the very antithesis of a competent system. Indeed, Urban et al. (2017) refer to the unsurprising difficulty in achieving a competent system of governance in Ireland, given the presence of a myriad of government departments each with a finger in the ECCE pie.

2.3 Competent Systems of Governance

According to Urban et al. (2017), macro-level governance is essential to the effective development of all aspects of ECCE, and for building a competent and quality driven ECCE system. As illustrated in Figure 3, a competent ECCE system requires collaboration and reciprocal relationships between individuals, teams, institutions, and levels of governance at a macro-policy level (see appendix 11).



Urban (2014) further holds that the reciprocal relationships, outlined in Figure 4, are based on shared knowledge (knowing), practices (doing) and values (being), allowing for competence to unfold within each of these 4 layers, resulting in a competent ECCE system.



Moreover, leadership and co-ordination at macro government level is central to competency within levels of governance, with an inherent value placed on consistency at departmental and policy level (Urban et al. 2017). However, in the Irish context, Moloney (2015a) indicates that such consistency and co-ordination is fragmented, unsustainable and in need of cross-departmental collaboration to decide with whom sectoral responsibility lies. She argues that the level of fragmentation is “unacceptable” (p.6) as it undermines and deters responsibility for children in the years before primary school. Likewise, Hayes (2016) attributes fragmented governance to a focus upon filling childcare ‘spaces’ and, failure to recognise ECCE services as environments that support early learning and development. Commenting on the ineffective and uncoordinated implementation of Siolta and Aistear, Hayes argues that the “unsupported [and] haphazard implementation of the frameworks for practice” (Hayes 2016, p. 201) epitomises the State’s incoherent commitment to effectively govern ECCE provision, signifying an incompetent system of ECCE governance.

Therefore, in order to understand the development of this complex and incompetent system of departmental auspices, it is important, in the first instance, to decipher the origins of the Irish ECCE sector.

2.4 The Origins of The ECCE Sector in Ireland

The development of the sector in Ireland began informally because of an economic boom experienced during the Celtic Tiger Era - 1994 to 2008 (Hayes and Bradley 2009, Prendiville 2013). As a result, economic prosperity and an expansion in female labour market participation (16.7% in 1981 to 46.4% in 2001) led to considerable demand for out-of-home childcare (Fine-Davis 2007). Prior to this, childcare provision was small scale, with the sector comprising primarily of part-time and not-for-profit/community services (Ibid.). However, once economic prosperity became a Government priority circa 2000, a myriad of policy initiatives that shaped the ongoing development of the sector occurred in quick succession (Moloney 2011; 2014b). Consequently, the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP) 2000 – 2006 (Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform (DJELR)) was critical to addressing the lack of childcare provision (Hayes and Bradley 2009) and, consolidating economic prosperity (Moloney 2011; 2014a; 2014b).

2.4.1 Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000-2006

In order to support the growth in the labour market, the State sought to increase the number of childcare places, thus, consolidating the economic boom (Fine-Davis 2007, Hayes and Bradley 2009; Moloney, 2014a). Because the EOCP was an equality measure, to eliminate barriers to employment for men and women, the DJELR assumed responsibility for childcare between 1999 and 2005 (Moloney 2011). A combination of European and Exchequer funding enabled the provision of capital grants to renovate existing services or build new facilities for centre-based childcare provision, along with staffing grants for disadvantaged areas (DJELR 2004).

Under the EOCP, unprecedented funding in the sum of £215 million was invested in the development of a childcare infrastructure, creating 33,582 centre based childcare spaces between 2000 and 2006 (Area Development Management (ADM) adding significantly to the 42,743 places existing at the beginning of the programme (ADM 2000; DJELR

2004). Consequently, upon conclusion of the EOCP, Ireland had a much-expanded ECCE sector comprising more than 76,000 places (ADM 2000; DJELR 2004). In addition, Wolfe, O'Donoghue-Hynes and Hayes (2013) report that the programme also established 33 City/County Childcare Committees (CCC) throughout Ireland through which the State delegated administrative responsibilities to local level structures for the first time. The purpose of the CCC's (which exist to the present day) was originally to support quality provision and, assist in the co-ordination of childcare at a national and local level (OECD 2004). As discussed later in *Part 2*, the role of the CCCs has expanded exponentially in line with various policy initiatives and now includes advice and support to ECCE managers.

2.4.2 Child Care Act 1991 and Associated Pre-School Services Regulations

Alongside the EOCP, *Section VII* of the *Child Care Act 1991, Supervision of Pre-School Services* provided for the development of regulations and a system of inspection for pre-school services, under the auspices of the Dept. of Health (DoH). This Act resulted in the development of the Childcare (Pre-school Services) Regulations 1996 and annual inspections of services, with the underlying purpose of enhancing and maintaining quality standards within childcare services (Moloney 2014b).

The 1996 Regulations placed a strong focus upon children's health and safety, focussing in particular, upon the structural aspects of provision such as adult: child ratios, equipment and materials; first aid, heating, lighting and sleeping facilities (DoH, 1996, Whitebread, Kuvalja and O'Connor 2014). As such, little attention was paid to process quality such as children's interactions or the programme/curriculum in the service.

Rather, Regulation 4: *Development of the Child* simply required that

A person carrying on a pre-school service shall ensure that every pre-school child attending the service has suitable means of expression and development through the use of books, toys, games and other play materials, having regard to his or her age and development (DoH 1996, p. 11)

According to Duignan and Walsh (2004) and O'Kane (2005), these regulations focussed upon the static aspects of quality provision and did not go far enough in terms of enhancing quality. For example, as previously mentioned, they overlooked staff training, which Sylva et al. (2004) for example, associate strongly with ECCE quality

None the less, a notification and inspection process introduced as part of the regulations, mandated providers to notify the then Health Board of a proposal to carry on an ECCE service (DoH, 1996). Once notified, services were subject to an annual inspection to

ensure compliance with regulations (Ibid.). While the intention was that these measures would enhance children's safety while attending an ECCE service, the *Report of the Partnership 2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare* (DJELR, 1999) criticized this process, suggesting that notification did not signify good practice, nor did it provide the service or public with confirmation of regulatory compliance. As a result, there were calls for a change in legislation to develop a system of registration that would enable services to practice by provision of a registration certificate displayed for parents and prospective users to see (DJELR 1999). As discussed later in this chapter, a system of registration did not materialise for a further fifteen years, until 2014.

As the DoH (changed to Department of Health and Children (DHC) in 1997) held responsibility for the sector in 1996, the task of undertaking inspection fell to Public Health Nurses (PHN) or Environmental Health Officers (EHO). Due to their lack of training in early childhood methodology, Bennett (2004) and Moloney (2014a; 2014b), argue that these inspectors were not suited to the task of pre-school inspection. In spite of expectations that the revised Childcare (Preschool Services) Regulations 2006 would address issues of inspectorate qualifications and experience, regrettably, this was not the case.

2.4.3 Childcare (Preschool Services) Regulations 2006

A decade after the introduction of the Childcare (Pre-school Services) Regulations 1996, the newly published Childcare (Pre-school Services) Regulations 2006 renewed a focus upon the structural aspects of quality with an inherent focus upon children's health and safety. Although little changed in terms of the focus of the 1996 and the 2006 regulations, macro-governance structures altered significantly.

On January 1st, 2005, the Health Act, 2004, established the Health Services Executive (HSE), which replaced the ten regional Health Boards. Thus, responsibility for regulatory enforcement and inspection of ECCE services transferred to the HSE, a single State body with responsibility for the provision of health care under the DHC. Inspection of services remained with PHNs with regulatory enforcement resting with the DHC. Furthermore, even though overall responsibility for the ECCE sector rested with the DJELR, an additional seven government departments (see Figure 3) were involved in the development of policies, legislation and initiatives aimed at improving the quality of ECCE provision between 1991 and 2006 (Oberhuemer, Schreyer, Neuman 2010). In effect, the development of qualifications, national quality standards,

regulations and an early childhood curriculum was underscored by multiple governing bodies (Moloney 2014a, Oberhuemer et al. 2010), highlighting “a remarkably fractured system” of ECCE from the beginning (Hayes, 2016, p.206).

Although little changed between the 1996 and the 2006 regulations, Moloney (2011) indicates that *Regulation 5: Health, Welfare and Development of the Child* within the Childcare (Preschool Services) Regulations 2006 (DHC 2006) (see appendix 14) went “further than any previous policy in placing children’s learning at the centre of practice” (p.7). Regardless, Oberhuemer et al. (2010, p.226) argues that the sector remained “largely uncoordinated...without common goals... [and] largely under-regulated”.

2.4.4 Office of the Minister for Children

Towards the end of 2005 and into 2006, a turning point regarding the overarching governance of the sector emerged with the establishment of the Office of the Minister for Children (OMC), as a subsidiary of the DHC, to provide coherence and consistency in policy making for children (Oberhuemer et al., 2010). The OMC was quickly renamed the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) in May 2008 to reflect its expanded role in the development of policy and, the delivery of services to children (Children’s Rights Alliance (CRA) 2008). However, Oberhuemer et al., (2010) describes the enduring confusion regarding the governance of the sector, noting that regulations continued to be developed in the Child Welfare and Policy Unit of the OMC (a division of the DoH) with services inspected by the Pre-school Inspectorate of the HSE, under regulations published by the DoH. Although the OMCYA intended to bring coherence to the sector, fragmentation in macro-level governance continued.

A core responsibility of the OMCYA involved further expansion of the sector by developing policy that focussed upon supporting children’s access to ECCE. A significant milestone in this regard occurred with the introduction of the Free Pre-School Year Scheme in 2010 by the OMCYA.

2.4.5 Free Pre-School Year Scheme 2010

Heckman (2008) asserts that Irish policy makers had progressively moved towards the concept of ECCE because of international foci on children’s earliest years, and recognition of the benefits of investing in provision for economic prosperity. Accordingly, the conclusions of the Barcelona European Council in 2002 were

significant. Under the agreements set out within this Summit, Ireland, along with the other European member states, were obliged to provide childcare to at least 33% of children under 3, and to 90% of children between 3 and mandatory school going age by 2010 (OECD 2004). The purpose of which was to improve employment opportunities for women and improve access to ECCE (OECD 2004; Oke 2019). However, the *Innocenti Report Card 8* (UNICEF 2008) presented stark results regarding the poor international standing of Ireland's ECCE sector, meeting just one of ten minimum standards for the protection of the rights of children in their most formative years (UNICEF 2008).

Nevertheless, the implementation of a universally subsidised year of free preschool called the Free Pre-School Year (commonly known as the ECCE Scheme) in 2010 was a "highly significant step in the development of Ireland's early childhood care and education policy rather than its childcare policy" (Hayes 2010, p.74). It resulted in large-scale reform of ECCE in Ireland, in particular, the quality agenda and, macro ECCE governance. Indeed, Bennett (2011) and Moloney (2015a) suggest that the shift in terminology from childcare to early childhood care and education indicated that discourse in Ireland was moving slowly towards an integrated approach to childcare and education.

In September 2010, approximately 63,000 children participated in the ECCE Scheme, rising to 67,000 approx. in 2011/2012 and 68,000 in 2012/2013 (Fitzgerald 2013a, Murphy 2015). In fact, at one stage in 2012/2013, 95% of the cohort of the then eligible children (aged between 3 years and 3 months and 4 years and 7 months) enrolled in the programme (Fitzgerald 2013a). The ECCE scheme provides 15 hours a week of free programme-based activities over a 38-week period from September to June (DCYA 2019a). 2018 saw an expansion of the ECCE scheme where eligible children start the scheme from the age of 2 years and 8 months and continue until the summer before they transition into primary school, provided they are not older than 5 years and 6 months before the end of the pre-school year (DCYA 2019a). According to Moloney and Pettersen (2017, p.32), since the establishment of the ECCE scheme in 2010, the Irish State have "assumed greater responsibility for ECCE in Ireland" by creating contractual agreements with services, in which curricular and qualification requirements are applied to the programmes provision. The service provides children with free, universal access to programme-based activities before they attend primary school in return for State capitation (Moloney 2014a).

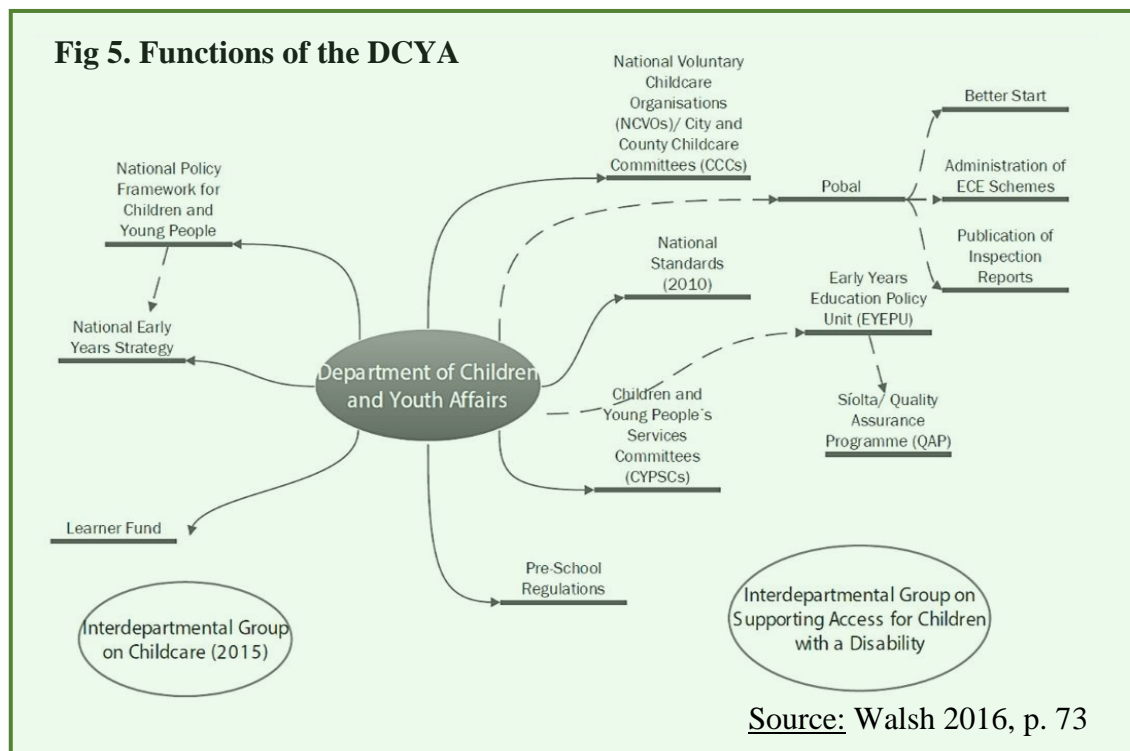
Capitation, paid directly to the service, is differentiated by the qualification level of the educator delivering the scheme (Moloney and Pope 2013). A standard capitation rate, €69 per child per week, applies where pre-school leaders working directly with the children availing of the scheme hold a minimum Quality & Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Level 6 Qualification in ECCE on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) (see appendix 6) and, provide an educational programme that adheres to the principles of both *Síolta* and *Aistear* (DCYA 2019a). A higher capitation, €80.25 per child per week, is paid to services where the room leader holds a Level 7/8 degree in ECCE (DCYA 2019a). The purpose being to incentivise highly skilled staff to work in the programme. By contrast, educators working directly with children outside the ECCE Scheme were not required to hold any formal qualification until 2016 (Govt. of Ireland, 2016). Thus, Moloney (2015b) suggests that although the ECCE scheme elevates the status of educators working with children availing of the scheme, it further fragments the sector by associating children younger than 2 years and 8 months solely with care. Furthermore, educators working with these younger children require lesser qualifications, thus, reinforcing the care/education divide within the sector (Ibid.).

Additionally, the macro-governance of the ECCE Scheme epitomises the “bewildering array of government departments, agencies and organisations” (Walsh 2016, p. 88) that currently resides within the sector. For example, POBAL, a State intermediary with responsibility for administering funding programmes for the early years sector, administer funding of the ECCE scheme (POBAL 2019a). Additionally, POBAL inspect compliance with the contractual requirements of the ECCE Scheme through compliance visits (Dublin City Childcare Committee (DCCC) 2018) (see appendix 8). These inspections ensure that online PIP registrations (Programme Implementation Platform used to register children under DCYA funded schemes) are reflective of the service’s current attendance levels and, to ensure accountability and transparency regarding the appropriate use of State funds (DCCC 2018; Walsh 2016).

Therefore, while the contractual requirements of the ECCE scheme are inspected by POBAL, the DES inspect the educational aspects. Moreover, the HSE (role transferred to TUSLA in 2014) inspect all aspects of provision for the entire cohort of children in ECCE services aged birth to six years before school (further discussion of DES and TUSLA occurs later in this chapter).

2.4.6 Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2011

In terms of macro level governance, between the establishment of the ECCE scheme in 2010 and its expansion in 2018, political responsibility for ECCE in Ireland gathered momentum. In 2011, for example, a dedicated, cabinet level ministry; the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) was established with a Minister for Children and Youth Affairs also appointed. The establishment of the DCYA marked a major streamlining of ECCE macro level governance, harmonising responsibility for the provision of ECCE, previously described as a “collection of unfinished stories, of fragmented and un-coordinated initiatives” (Urban et al. 2011, p. 32). Prior to this, the OECD (2004) described the involvement of a myriad of government departments, as a “defining characteristic” (p.23) of Ireland’s ECCE sector. The newly established single government department, the DCYA, has overarching responsibility for the development, co-ordination and implementation of policies and legislation, along with programme administration (DCYA 2019b). Figure 5 outlines the key functions of the DCYA as identified by Walsh (2016).



As illustrated, the Early Years Division of the DCYA holds responsibility for the creation of the “administratively complex” (p. 74) ECCE funding schemes including the ECCE scheme, Training and Employment Childcare (TEC), Community Childcare

Subvention (CCS) and more recently, the National Childcare Scheme (NCS) (Walsh 2016). The DCYA (2019*d*) notes however, that in time, the NCS will replace the other funding schemes, serving as single overarching funding scheme for the sector in Ireland. In addition, the DCYA funds the thirty locally based CCC's and six National Voluntary Childcare Organisations including Early Childhood Ireland, Barnardos and National Childhood Network who provide support services to parents and providers across Ireland (POBAL 2020).

The DCYA also holds responsibility for the development of policy and legislation for the ECCE sector, such as the Early Years Services Regulations, 2016 and other initiatives which promote the quality of both the workforce and services, such as *First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028* (DCYA 2019*b*). While the Early Years Education Policy Unit of the DES ultimately holds responsibility for the creation and monitoring of the ECCE practice frameworks; Síolta (CECDE 2006) and Aistear (NCCA 2009), the DCYA supports their implementation through the *Better Start Quality Development Service* and the *National Síolta Aistear Initiative* (DCYA 2018) (see appendix 5).

As illustrated in Figure 5, although the DCYA holds primary responsibility for ECCE, multiple actors including the DES, the HSE and POBAL continue to influence various aspects of provision. Start Strong (2010) describe the DCYA's remit as providing "dedicated leadership on children's issues and to facilitate joined-up policy-making, linking together different policy issues as they impact on children" (p. 16). This ideological stance is at odds with the manner in which the establishment of TUSLA, the Child and Family Agency, 2014 resulted in further sectoral fragmentation as well as increased governance and accountability.

2.4.7 TUSLA – The Child and Family Agency 2014

A second monumental change in terms of macro-level governance occurred with the commencement and implementation of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013 which provided for the establishment of TUSLA – The Child and Family Agency on the 1st of January 2014. A major catalyst for this change were the revelations of systematic abuse of children within Irish institutions (Burns and McGregor 2018). Indeed, the then Minister for Children, Frances Fitzgerald, T.D., described the child protection and welfare system in Ireland, as a "rubble of a system that has been crumbling for decades" (2012, cited in McGregor 2014, p.772). The establishment of TUSLA therefore,

represents one of the most revolutionary shifts in child protection and welfare, in the history of the State (Burns and McGregor 2018). Under the auspices of the DCYA, TUSLA became the first autonomous State agency responsible for supporting families and, promoting children's health, safety and welfare (McGregor 2014). Responsibility for Child Protection and Welfare Services, the National Education Welfare Board, the Family Support Agency and Preschool Inspection services transferred to this cohesive statutory body (Sheridan 2018).

In relation to macro-level ECCE governance, as mentioned, responsibility for regulatory enforcement and associated inspection practices transferred from the HSE to TUSLA (McGregor 2014). As from January 1st, 2014 therefore, TUSLA hold statutory responsibility for enforcing and inspecting compliance against the childcare regulations. Following years of disquiet about inspectorate qualifications, 2018 evidenced a significant change in this regard. While in the past, PHNs primarily undertook inspections, from 2018, inspectorate qualifications were expanded to include those holding a Level 8 degree in ECCE; Child Psychology or Social Care/Work (DCYA 2018*b*, press release). While Minister Zappone described expansion of the qualification requirements as a "milestone in the professionalisation of the sector" (Ibid), Moloney (2018*a*) argues that while welcome, that in broadening the scope of inspectorate qualifications, TUSLA did not recognise ECCE as a discipline in its own right.

2.4.8 Early Years Education-focused Inspections 2016

With the exception of the Early Start programme, the DES has not had a role in relation to young children outside of formal school. With this in mind, a significant initiative in 2016 resulted in a paradigm shift in macro level governance with the introduction of the DES Early Years Education Focused Inspections (EYEIs). At the request of the DCYA, the DES introduced EYEIs of services participating in the ECCE scheme (DES 2018*a*). Accordingly, the context, nature, appropriateness, and quality of educational provision for children availing of the ECCE scheme is assessed under four areas of quality and best practice, as illustrated in Figure 6 (DES 2018*a*).

Fig 6. Areas of Quality within the Early Years Education-Focused Inspection Framework



Moloney (2015a) commends this approach to inspection, noting the shift in the dynamic of inspections from “compliance through fear” (p. 3) as with regulatory compliance associated with childcare regulations to “inspectorate interest” (p. 3), while also providing early years educators with constructive advice and affirming good practice (DES 2018a). These inspections examine how the National practice frameworks; Aistear (NCCA 2009) and Síolta (CECDE 2006) are being implemented in practice within the ECCE scheme. Pre-inspection and post-inspection meetings are carried out with ECCE service managers where the process of inspection is outlined, and findings are communicated regarding their rating on a quality continuum from ‘Excellent’ to ‘Poor’ (DES 2018a) (see appendix 7). A particular strength of the DES inspections relates to the recruitment of inspectors who must hold a Level 8 degree in ECCE and at least 5 years’ experience in the field (Moloney 2015a). However, researchers also highlight certain limitations of EYEI’s, in particular, the sole focus upon educational provision for children attending the ECCE Scheme (e.g., Hayes and O’Neill 2019; Moloney 2015a). This further perpetuates a care-education divide as well as reinforcing a diverse governance structure (Moloney 2015a; 2018a; 2019a). Nevertheless, because of the EYEIs, the State, and in particular the DES now assumes greater responsibility for the quality of ECCE (Moloney 2015a).

Significantly, the introduction of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 represents a seismic reform of the ECCE sector in Ireland. These regulations, which, dramatically altered the ECCE regulatory landscape, and, clearly

underpin micro-level governance within settings, are discussed in detail in section 2.11 of this chapter. In general, however, it is evident that macro-level Governance continues to involve a confusing array of governance structures, representing a legacy of the ECCE system in Ireland since its origins in 2000. As discussed, governance has moved across and within various government departments including, the DoH, the DHC, the DJELR, OMC, the OMCYA, and the DCYA, with a shift to the Department of Children, Disability, Equality and Integration (DCDEI) imminent. During the writing of this dissertation, yet another shift in the macro-governance of the ECCE sector occurred with the establishment of a new Department with responsibility for ECCE; the Department of Children, Disability, Equality and Integration (DCDEI). Although the Department's name has altered and the DCYA's roles and functions remain, this shift in departmental governance suggests a much-expanded role with an extensive portfolio.

Currently, in spite of the establishment of a single government Ministry; the DCYA (or DCDEI), the DES now too holds responsibility for the quality of educational provision for children attending the ECCE scheme, thus reinforcing a split system of governance. Consequently, the DCYA and the DES demand different requirements of the sector (Moloney 2018a), weakening the concept of a competent system in the Irish context. The newly appointed Minister for Children, Disability, Equality and Integration, Roderic O'Gorman, T.D, acknowledges the inordinate fragmentation and complex architecture of State administration that characterises the ECCE sector. He states, "structural reform is needed to ensure an effective system for the oversight and delivery of childcare services" (O'Gorman 2020, online). He further indicates his intention to establish a single State agency with responsibility for overseeing ECCE. This agency, *Childcare Ireland*, aims to reform and modernise the current system of oversight and governance, by provision of an efficient and effective system of ECCE administration (DCYA 2020, press release). It also aims to promote the professionalisation of the workforce by "spearheading leadership, best practice and innovation, and professional development in community and private settings" as well as the development of career paths for ECCE staff (Govt. of Ireland 2020, p. 80). It is therefore hoped that *Childcare Ireland* will positively affect the role of the ECCE manager by reducing the avenues from which State demands emanate, thus, making the implementation of policy and legislation more manageable.

2.5 Juxtapositioning Ireland’s Macro-Level Governance within an International Context

There is merit in exploring how other jurisdictions approach macro level governance and how they have managed the shift from a split to an integrated system of ECCE governance. Analysis of international ECCE contexts, Sweden, and Luxembourg in particular, highlights their move from divided macro level governance to departmental integration. This movement between government departments shifts the “responsibility for all ECEC services” (Neuman 2005, p.131) and thus, provides an ultimate example of the concept of integrated macro-governance; a single government department within a country having sole responsibility and accountability for ECCE provision.

2.5.1 Luxembourg

In Luxembourg, responsibility for children and youth (pre-school and crèche along with after-school care) outside of formal education was, historically, located under the administrative auspices of the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs (OECD 2015). A clear lack of cohesion in responsibilities regarding services for children prevailed. However, in December 2013, the Government amalgamated responsibility for all children and youth into a dedicated ministry: The Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth. The overarching goal of this governance shift was to enhance the quality and efficiency of programme provision by integrating the administration of resources for children aged from birth to 12 years including formal education and childcare (OECD 2015) (see appendix 12). While the education and childcare sectors in Luxembourg developed separately, with varying pedagogical and educational methodologies, and governing structures (Ibid.), amalgamation into the Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth (2013) has given childcare a strong educational directive. Thus, Schreyer and Oberhuemer (2017) suggest the sector is now distinguished between formal and non-formal education as opposed to childcare and education.

While Luxembourg’s financial investment (0.6% of GDP) in ECCE sits in 12th place of 28 EU countries (Schraad, Tischler, Schmilller, Heller and Siemer, 2017), it compares favourably with Ireland’s investment of 0.2% of GDP (SIPTU 2019a). In line with establishing an integrated system of ECCE administration, the Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth, Luxembourg has prioritised the development of an

educated, experienced and professional ECCE workforce (OECD 2015). As discussed in *Part 2*, section 2.17, this has resulted in considerable benefits for the workforce, by comparison to Ireland where nine out of ten educators question their future in the sector because they are undervalued, underpaid, and underappreciated (Moloney 2019a; 2019b).

2.5.2 Sweden

The Nordic countries, which have also combined all children's services including childcare, under the Ministry of Education (Bennett, 2011) have long been established as high achievers, and the gold standard in the field of ECCE (Barnardos and Start Strong 2012; Ricci 2015; Urban et al. 2011; 2012). In terms of the Swedish ECCE sector in particular, Neuman (2005) describes how a major adjustment in terms of its administrative auspices occurred with the relocation of political responsibility from the Ministry of Social Affairs to the Ministry of Education in 1996. As a result, the Ministry of Education has sole responsibility and accountability for Sweden's ECCE sector, providing an integrated system of care and education, known as Educare (Ricci, 2015).

The Education Act 2010 entitles children to a place in an early years/after-school service, as well as a place in a primary school (Barnardos and Start Strong 2012; Karlsson-Lohmander, 2017). This unified system of care and education caters for children from the ages of 1 – 12 years, which includes preschools for children from 1 – 5 years, a separate preschool for children aged 6 – 7 years and out of school childcare (Karlsson-Lohmander 2017). Again, it is evident that a unitary system of macro ECCE governance, as in Sweden, values an educated and professional workforce by emphasising the experience and skills of staff (Barnardos and Start Strong 2012). As such, preschool teachers are trained to the equivalent of a 3 ½ year bachelor's degree and remunerated at a level on par with primary school teachers (Bennett 2011). This significantly exceeds Ireland's current qualification requirements and working conditions where ECCE staff are "living on the margins of poverty" due to low wages (Moloney, 2019a, p.1) and just 25% of the workforce hold a level 7 undergraduate degree or higher (POBAL, 2019a). Undoubtedly, Sweden's level of investment is representative of their recognition of the importance of quality ECCE provision, topping the table of 28 EU countries with 1.3% of its GDP allocated to pre-primary education (Schraad et al., 2017). By comparison, Ireland sits on the bottom rung of the ladder in 28th place (Ibid.).

Integrated systems exist in other countries also. Urban et al. (2012) note that the United Kingdom, Iceland, Slovenia, Spain and New Zealand have also integrated their macro-governance structures into one leading ministerial department for ECCE. As noted by Walsh (2016), a cohesive and united departmental leadership is required to ensure that policy and legislation is more manageable for those tasked with implementing it. Given Ireland's split system of governance, which results in competing demands from multiple actors (e.g., TUSLA, DCYA, POBAL, DES), at a micro-setting level, there is evidence that ECCE providers are struggling to deal with the multiple Government directives (Moloney and Pettersen 2017). The remainder of this chapter (i.e., *Part 2*) illustrates how Ireland's complex system of macro-level governance directly affects governance and management at micro-setting level.

Part 2

2.6 Introduction

As mentioned, this section deals with the relationship between macro-level governance and, micro-level governance and management at ECCE service level in Ireland. As such, it explores the expanding roles of an ECCE manager in line with policy developments, commencing with the establishment of the Childcare (Preschool Services) Regulations 1996 and, culminating in the implementation of the National Childcare Scheme (NCS) in 2019. It highlights the increased accountability pressures placed upon managers from a multitude of governing bodies and, the sheer complexity of their role because of a rapidly developing ECCE policy landscape.

The OECD (2012) document *Start Strong III: A Quality Toolbox for Early Childhood Education and Care* urges policy makers to identify specific policy measures that enhance quality ECCE. It asks, “what kind of qualifications and training would be most relevant for managers [?]” and, points to the need for further research in the area of managerial competencies and knowledge, rather than focussing solely upon staff qualifications. As the discussion in the present chapter indicates, given the complexity of the ECCE manager’s role in the context of the division between *care* and *education*, which embodies a divided governance structure in terms of policy development, regulatory auspices, funding, and qualification requirements (Moloney and Pettersen 2017), the need for management qualifications, continuous professional development (CPD) and State support is paramount.

2.7 Micro-Governance

In 2018, TUSLA developed a *Quality and Regulatory Framework* (QRF) (see appendix 5) to support the sector in complying with the Early Years Services Regulations, 2016. The QRF stresses the critical importance of micro-level governance, which it describes as the establishment of clear lines of accountability and authority through the identification of those responsible for making decisions and justifying actions (TUSLA 2018a). Similarly, in Australia, the *National Quality Framework* (Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) 2020) describes governance as a set

of systems that are in place to support the effective management and operation of a service. Moreover, Moloney and Pettersen (2017) associate governance with oversight, guidance and, the involvement of a governance structure through which duties are executed. In a similar vein, Maloney (2016) associates 'oversight and accountability with a manager's governance responsibilities.

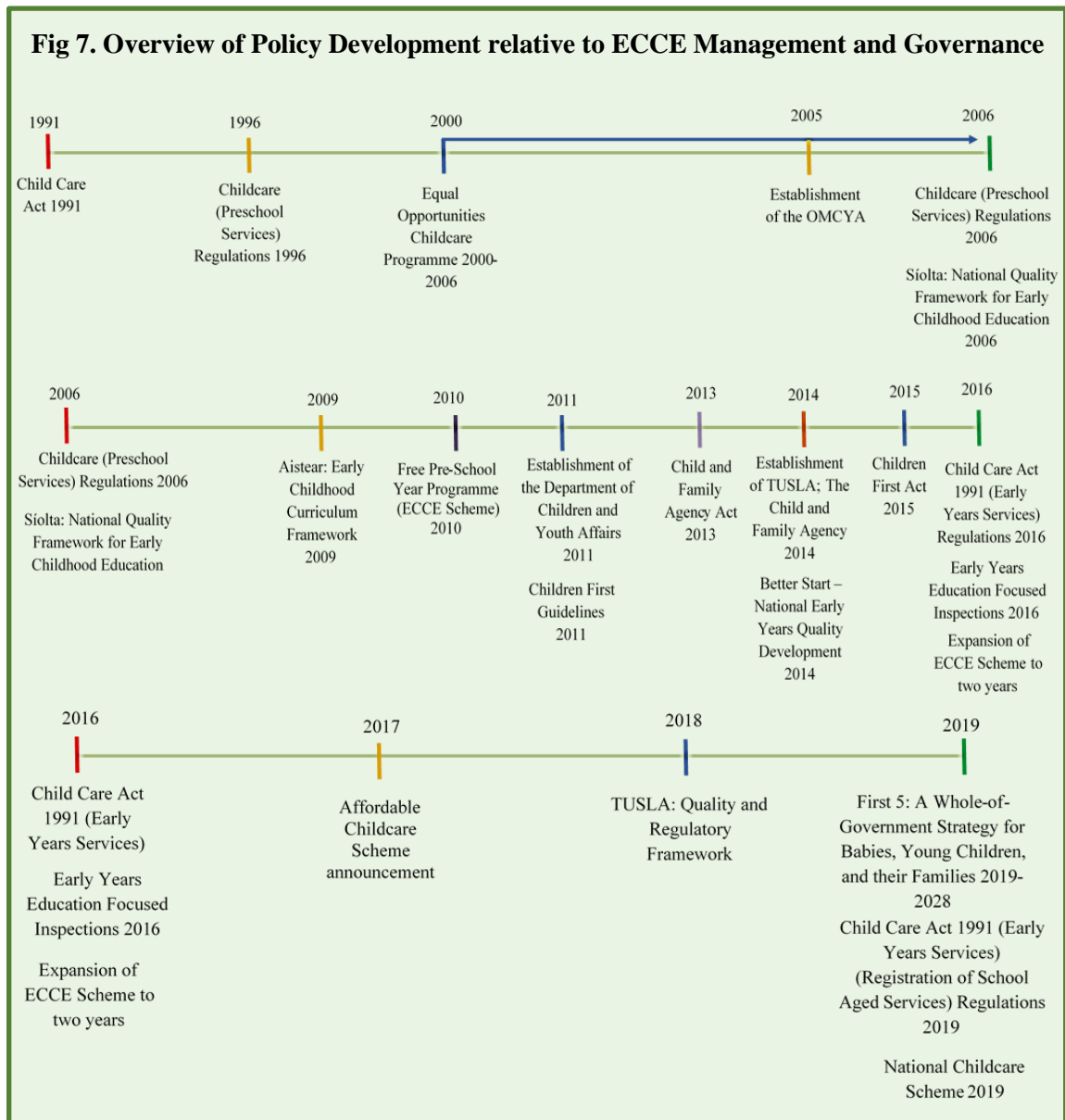
2.7.1 Corporate governance

In an Australian context, governance is located within the context of company law, commonly referred to as "corporate governance" ... [associated with] ... "the control of corporations and systems of accountability" (Farrar, 2005, p.3). Corporate governance bears a strong relationship with legal regulation (Ibid.). Furthermore, in the Australian context, Maloney (2016) and Byrne (2009) assert that corporate governance applies to community and not-for-profit childcare service provision. According to Maloney (2016), the manner in which an organisation or entity is governed is relative to those who have the authority to make decisions, whereas, Byrne (2009) discusses legal regulation, accountability and the duties of directors in upholding control of governance practices. Similarly, in Ireland, the Governance Code, a code of practice for the governance of community childcare provision, describes corporate governance as "good governance" in which an organisation's governing body (a manager/council/ director) oversees the achievement of specific objectives and, in doing so, does "the right thing the right way" (The Charities Regulator 2019). This code of practice sets out a framework of minimum standards, which ensures the organisation is managed in an efficient, effective, accountable and transparent manner (Ibid.)

A fundamental connection, therefore, exists between governance structures (i.e. accountability, oversight, authority, responsibility) and management practices in operating an ECCE service. To understand the contribution that governance structures and management practices make to quality provision, it is important to elaborate on the development of Ireland's policy context relative to governance and management. In this way, the manner in which the roles and responsibilities of the ECCE manager have evolved over time become apparent.

2.8 Expansion of the Management Role

As alluded to earlier, since 1996, the manager's role has become increasingly complex resulting from the multiple demands created by a multiplicity of policy developments (see Figure 7).



Moloney and Pettersen (2017) indicate that the degree of change experienced within a service is determined by governance structures, levels of investment and regulatory requirements, which, in Ireland's case, has been somewhat of a labyrinth from the beginning. As previously mentioned, the EOCP placed Irish ECCE on an upward trajectory and thus, significantly contributed to the managerial roles and governance responsibilities evident today (see appendix 15). The sudden demand for childcare

provision combined with renewed societal and governmental attitudes to children's early years, resulted in remarkable change for the ECCE manager.

2.8.1 Childcare (Preschool Services) Regulations

Part 1 articulated how the manager's role received little attention within the Child Care (Pre-school Services) Regulations 1996. Indeed, these regulations overlooked the need for qualification requirements for either ECCE staff or management. All that was required was a "competent adult" or "suitable person" (DoH 1996, p.33). Yet, for the first time, managers were required to adhere to regulation and to facilitate inspections by PHNs. A decade later, the Childcare (Preschool Services) Regulations 2006, further expanded the statutory roles and responsibilities placed upon ECCE managers. While maintaining a predominant focus upon children's health and safety, these regulations renewed a focus upon adult/child ratios and children's experiences. Critically, in the context of the present study, they also focussed upon management responsibilities, including robust recruitment practices such as Garda vetting for ECCE staff (DHC, 2006) (see appendix 13). In relation to qualifications, the 2006 regulations recommended that at least 50% of staff should hold a qualification relevant to the care and education of children and, that these staff should rotate among age groups (DHC 2006). A lax approach was evident in relation to micro-level governance. *Regulation 8: Management and Staffing* simply required that "the service [must have] a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required" (DHC 2006, p.6). In a critique of the regulatory regime in place at that time, Moloney (2010; 2014b) asserts that the Childcare Pre-school Services Regulations, 2006 did not go far enough in terms of qualification requirements.

From a governance stance, even though the EOCP, and, the Childcare Pre-School Services Regulations, 2006 resulted in an increasingly complex managerial role, no provision was made for management training, or qualification requirements. As noted by Fine-Davis (2007, p.17) qualifications were not legislatively required to "own, manage or work in childcare in Ireland". Clearly, the State was committed to managing the sector at macro-level, rather than addressing issues of quality management and governance at micro-setting level. A full decade was to pass before a review of the Childcare (Pre-school services) Regulations, 2006, was undertaken. However, the period between 2006 and 2016 can be described as a decade of significant sectoral change in terms of accountability demands and downward governmental pressure on

ECCE managers, much of which initially resulted from the establishment of the ECCE Scheme in 2010.

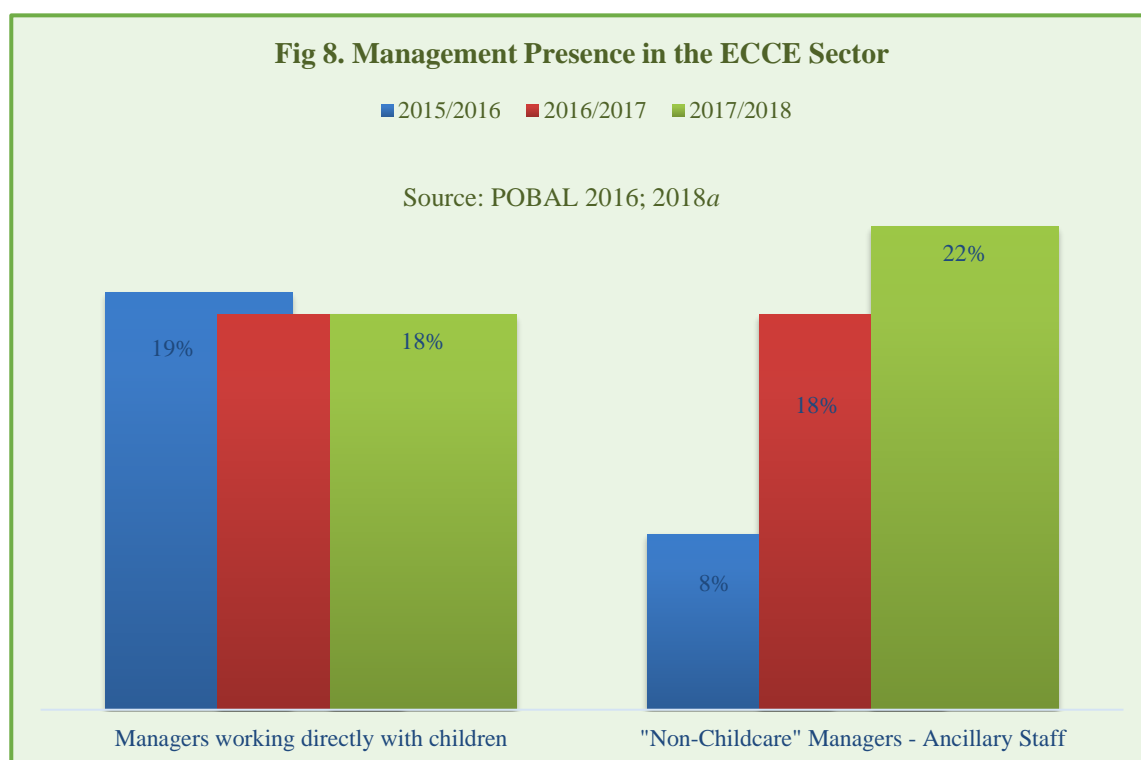
2.8.2 Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme

Just as the EOCP altered the ECCE landscape, the ECCE Scheme marked a “watershed in the development of ECCE in Ireland” (Moloney 2014*a*, p.75). For the first time in the history of the sector, educators (Room leaders) working directly with children in the ECCE scheme were required to hold a qualification at QQI Level 5, establishing a link between quality ECCE and qualifications (Moloney 2014*a*; Moloney 2015*a*; Moloney and Pope 2015). Ironically, upon the introduction of the scheme in 2010, 40% of the workforce did not meet the basic qualification requirement (DES, 2010). It was only in late 2013 that the State decided to support educators in upskilling. Consequently, a ‘Learner Fund’ was made available which provided financial assistance towards the cost of further training at Level 5 or 6 (Moloney 2015*b*; Walsh 2016). Notwithstanding the DES’s (2010) acknowledgements of the relationship between qualifications and quality, Moloney (2015*b*) indicates that the allocation of funding to enable educators to undergo training solely at Level 5, was disturbing, and a clear indication that the State had no intention of addressing the issue of status in the ECCE workforce. However, the decision in 2015, to increase this qualification requirement for room leaders working directly with children in the ECCE scheme to QQI Level 6 has significantly affected the professionalisation of the sector. Consequently, the POBAL Early Years Sector Profile Report (2019*a*) illustrate that 41% of staff working directly with children have obtained an NFQ Level 6, while 25% have a Level 7 or higher. Figures also show that between 2014 and 2015/2016, staff with a Level 5 qualification dropped from 36.9% to 32%, while those with a Level 6 increased from 35.2% to 38%, indicating that staff upskilled in accordance with the new qualification requirement of the ECCE scheme (POBAL 2015; 2016).

As mentioned previously, 2016 saw the expansion of the ECCE scheme from one year of free pre-school provision to two years. This led to a rapid increase in the numbers of children participating, with numbers almost doubling from 67,000 in 2015-2016, to 121,000 in 2016-2017 (Walsh 2018), significantly amplifying the administrative burden placed on managers (see appendix 10) including the completion of online registration and financial accountability for State funds (Moloney and Pettersen 2017; Oke 2019). Furthermore, the contractual arrangements associated with the scheme places

considerable demands upon managers in terms of human resourcing, administration, financial management and curriculum oversight (Moloney and Pettersen 2017).

As indicated earlier, POBAL maintain statistics relating to the ECCE sector profile. Up to 2016, these Early Years Sector Survey Reports focussed solely upon early childhood educators with little if any focus upon ECCE management other than service designation, i.e., community or private based. Since 2016, these surveys provide specific information relating to ECCE managers, indicating that 22% of the ECCE ancillary workforce are in management positions while 18% of staff working directly with children hold management positions (POBAL 2016; 2018a). In terms of their involvement in administration, Figure 8 illustrates an interesting trend, i.e., the 14% increase in “non-childcare” managers (i.e., managers involved in administrative tasks only) between 2015/2016 and 2017/2018, a time which saw the expansion of the ECCE scheme, the introduction of the Early Years Services Regulations 2016 and Early Years Education Focussed Inspections.



2.8.2 (a) Administrative Burden

The trend shown in Figure 8 supports Moloney and Pettersen's (2017) claim, that the inordinate administrative burden experienced by ECCE managers takes them away from direct work with children, reducing their role to that of counting units and balancing the books for Government.

Mulligan's (2015) research into the challenges facing managers of community-based services in Ireland is consistent with this view, with multiple ECCE managers speaking about the increased time spent on administration and non-childcare duties as opposed to time spent with children. Similarly, the DES (2018*b*), Moloney, and Pettersen (2017) highlight the challenges associated with multiple compliance visits and in particular, the increasing administrative burden placed on ECCE managers. In fact, the DES (2018*b*) consider how "Between TUSLA, EYEI and POBAL, the documentation and paperwork and worry and hassle is huge" (p. 23) with managers now spending "more and more time in the office, filling out forms, keeping track of information for different schemes" (Moloney and Pettersen 2017, p.92).

In a DCYA (2019*f*) Press Release, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs Dr. Katherine Zappone T.D. acknowledged the administrative burden associated with the funding schemes for managers and, announced the provision of the Programme Support Payment and Transitional Support Payment (see appendix 5). The intention is to compensate providers for the amount of time spent in complying with the administrative requirements of DCYA funded schemes (POBAL 2019*d*). Commenting on the imminent introduction of the National Childcare Scheme, and the providers imperative role in the programmes implementation, she notes "it is important that providers are supported to ensure that the biggest change ever undertaken in early learning and childcare becomes a reality" (DCYA 2019*f*, press release). This very statement verifies the Herculean task that rests with ECCE managers across Ireland in terms of transforming the ideology of macro-level policy into the reality of micro-level practice. Thus, while financial incentives go some way towards supporting managers to meet statutory governance and management requirements; given the relationship between management and quality (OECD 2012; Rodd 2013; Sylva et al. 2004; Sylva et al. 2010), it must be asked; Is this enough? As Moloney and Pettersen (2017) consider, the effective management of an ECCE service requires much more than an ability to meet administrative requirements.

The absence of consultation or support from policy makers and other stakeholders in the implementation of the scheme and its extension is a serious issue for managers and providers (Moloney and Pettersen, 2017; Neylon 2012; Oke 2019). Furthermore, as mentioned in *Part 1*, the ECCE scheme perpetuates the split system of governance, whereby services participating in the scheme are inspected by TUSLA, the DES and POBAL and, services caring for younger children not availing of the scheme, are inspected by TUSLA and POBAL. As such, this scheme places unprecedented demands and pressures on ECCE managers in an already “remarkably fractured system” (Hayes 2016, p. 206). Given that managers are not required to hold a qualification, the extent to which they are prepared for these enhanced managerial roles and responsibilities is questionable.

2.9 Breach of Trust

In 2013, three short years after the introduction of the ECCE Scheme, the national Irish broadcaster, Raidió Teilifís Éireann (RTÉ) highlighted ineffective micro-level governance and management in certain private corporate chains of ECCE services in Ireland, in a documentary called ‘*Breach of Trust*’. The gross incompetence, negligence and dereliction of duties exposed within this documentary underscored poorly managed services, revealing harrowing practices involving physical and psychological abuse of young children in centre-based childcare (Moloney 2014a). The documentary uncovered a significant dereliction of management and governance duties and, a shocking disregard for children’s health, safety, and well-being (Ibid.). Although managers are considered the lynchpin of quality (Moloney and Pettersen 2017), this was not evident in the services featured in the RTÉ documentary, which, exposed “haunting images that will strike terror into every parent” (Frances Fitzgerald, T.D., then Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in Wayman, 2016). Clearly, the lack of political attention placed upon governance and management within ECCE services lead to the shortcomings revealed in the documentary and, seriously betrayed the trust of both children and parents. Minister Fitzgerald subsequently announced that any extension of the ECCE scheme would be stalled, until the standard of quality within the sector significantly improved (Healy 2013). Yet as indicated in *Part 1*, an expansion of the scheme occurred without addressing these issues.

2.9.1 Hanafin Report 2014

Following the *Breach of Trust* documentary, Hanafin (2014) undertook an analysis of pre-school inspection reports under the Childcare (Pre-School Services) Regulations 2006 (DHC 2006). She interrogated the inspection reports across four thematic areas:

- Is the service safe?
- Does the service support the health, welfare and development of children in its care?
- Are the premises and facilities structurally sound and fit for purpose?
- Is the service well governed?

In terms of how well the service is governed, Hanafin (2014) concluded “pre-school services are most likely to be assessed as non-compliant in areas relating to management and staffing” (2014, p.97). She identified governance as an area of major non-compliance, as exemplified through *Regulation 8 – Management and Staffing* (DHC 2006) under which 47% of services were non-compliant (Hanafin 2014). She further identified health and safety concerns relating to adult: child ratios, appropriate vetting of staff and record keeping as problematic, thus consolidating the findings of the *Breach of Trust* documentary.

According to Moloney and Pettersen (2017) governance is a “core management function” (p.6) that plays an imperative role in determining standards for quality provision (Neuman 2005). However, both the *Breach of Trust* documentary and the Hanafin report (2014) indicate that statutory governance and appropriate management practices were not prioritised by the managers in question, all at the expense of children’s health, safety, and welfare.

2.10 Government Response to Breach of Trust

Murphy (2015) suggests that in recent times, the Irish government have begun to focus upon the quality of provision for children attending ECCE services, rather than concentrating on increasing the number of childcare places in centre-based provision. A major contributor to this focus is the *Breach of Trust* (2013) documentary, following which, the then Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Francis Fitzgerald T.D,

initiated the need for radical change within the sector. She therefore announced an eight-step Pre-School Quality Agenda (Table 1).

Table 1. Pre-School Quality Agenda

Action	Description of Plan of Action
1	Publication of on-line inspection reports from 1st July 2013
2	Strengthening the national inspection system
3	Introducing new protocols on regulatory compliance and enforcement
4	Increasing and widening the sanctions which can be taken for non-compliance
5	Increasing the qualification requirements for all staff in pre-school services
6	Introducing a registration system
7	Implementing new national pre-school standards
8	Supporting implementation of the Síolta framework and Aistear curriculum

Source: Moloney, 2014a

Additionally, four months after the exposé in September 2013, the DCYA (2013) published *Right from the Start: The Report of the Expert Advisory Group on the Early Years Strategy*. The purpose of the expert advisory group was to assess the gaps and deficits within ECCE policy. The group praised Minister Fitzgerald for developing the Pre-School Quality Agenda. Their report signifies that “strong leadership at all levels of service provision” (p.25) is essential to assuring good governance practices in ECCE services and, denounced the provision of public funding to any service in breach of regulations. However, Moloney (2014a) was critical of the State’s response to *Breach of Trust* and, in particular, the pre-school quality agenda, noting that six of the measures related to increased inspection. She articulates how the inspection system had in fact failed the sector, as inspectors had not identified the serious regulatory breaches outlined in the documentary.

Regardless, the national outcry following *Breach of Trust*, compelled the DCYA to collaborate with the DES to initiate a number of ECCE policies aimed at supporting quality practices under Action 8 of the Pre-School Quality Agenda. The establishment of *Better Start* (2014) and the introduction of DES Early Years Education Focused Inspections (2016) marks a significant shift towards quality orientated discourse and practice. *Better Start*, a national on-site mentoring programme, works with the City and County Childcare Committees (CCCs) to support ECCE practitioners in the delivery of quality experiences for children in a co-ordinated, cohesive and consistent manner

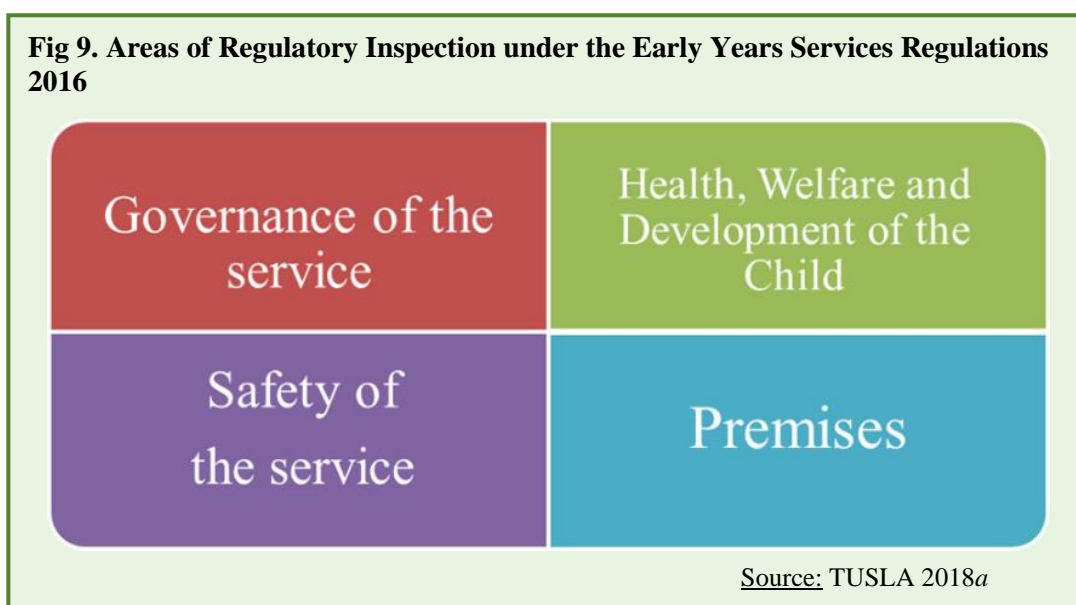
(POBAL 2019b). Early Years Specialists employed by Better Start are qualified to minimum Level 8 in ECCE on the NFQ. They use the Aistear – Síolta Practice Guide (NCCA 2014) as a key resource in working directly with ECCE services identified within inspection reports as in need of quality improvement (Murphy 2015, POBAL 2019b). The *Better Start Mentoring Programme* provides educators with training, continuous professional development, networking opportunities, support groups and individual/team-based development work provided by local CCC's (POBAL 2019b). While welcome and much needed, this initiative focusses solely upon supporting practitioners working with children, leaving poor management and governance practices to continue largely un-checked and unsupported.

Nevertheless, Moloney (2014a) asserts that the measures within the pre-school quality agenda laid the foundations for the establishment of new training requirements and pre-school standards. It may be that these training requirements and more rigorous quality standards; manifest through the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 (Govt. of Ireland 2016) which altered the ECCE landscape in terms of qualification requirement, but more importantly, in the context of the present study, in the areas of governance and management responsibilities at micro-setting level.

2.11 Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations, 2016

The long-established oversight of micro-level governance and management in the 1996 and 2006 regulations changed considerably with the publication of the Early Years Services Regulations 2016. Accordingly, for the first time in the history of regulatory oversight, ECCE managers are now required to uphold stringent and effective governance and management structures and practices. The Early Years services Regulations, 2016 have completely transformed the regulatory and governance landscape in which ECCE managers work, placing “a specific emphasis on the governance of services” (TUSLA, 2018a, p. vii) and relate effective governance practices to the safety and care of children (Ibid.). As outlined in Figure 9, inspection under the Early Years Services Regulations 2016, focus upon four main areas, one of which is the extent to which the service is well governed (Ibid.).

Fig 9. Areas of Regulatory Inspection under the Early Years Services Regulations 2016



As illustrated, the Early Years Services Regulations, 2016 resulted in sweeping reform in a number of core areas relating to mandatory staff qualifications, well established management structures, promotion of the health, development and welfare of the child and application for registration on the national register of early years services (Govt. of Ireland 2016).

➤ Staff Qualifications:

All those working directly with children in centre-based ECCE services must now hold a minimum QQI Level 5 Qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or an equivalent qualification deemed appropriate by the Minister (Govt. of Ireland, 2016). ECCE managers are legally obliged therefore to ensure that all staff hold the relevant qualification to work with children age birth to six years before school and not just in relation to the ECCE Scheme.

➤ Registration:

PART VIIA of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013, provided for the establishment of a national register of ECCE services. From January 1st, 2014, all ECCE services (existing and new) were required to register with TUSLA rather than notify as required since the initial introduction of regulations in 1996. As a result, ECCE managers must submit an application for inclusion on TUSLA's register of early years services 3 months prior to the commencement of their service (Child and Family Agency Act 2013; Govt. of Ireland 2016). Following receipt of an application (see appendix 8), TUSLA reviews the accompanying documents and

carries out a ‘fitness for purpose’ inspection to inform their decision regarding registration (TUSLA 2018a). A decision is subsequently made to either approve registration and deem a service suitable for ECCE provision, approve and attach conditions to the registration or, not register the service at all (TUSLA 2018a, Govt. of Ireland 2016). Although a service remains on the register for a period of 3 years, TUSLA can remove a service where there is sufficient evidence to indicate a service is in consistent breach of regulations. In addition to the requirement to recruit qualified staff, the requirement to register a service, places another statutory administrative responsibility upon ECCE managers, adding to the complexity of their roles and responsibilities.

➤ Health Welfare and Development of the Child

Regulation 19 obliges providers to implement appropriate care and programme practices that are suited to the child’s learning, development and well-being while also taking their individual needs and interests into consideration (Govt. of Ireland 2016; TUSLA 2018a). By comparison to preceding regulatory provision of children’s health, development and welfare, regulation 19 represents significant progress (see appendix 14) requiring a provider to ensure interactions, activities, materials and equipment are both safe and appropriate to the child’s age and stage of development.

Furthermore, Regulation 19 requires that services create a policy on the use of the internet and photographic and recording devices including parent/guardian consent to allow children access to the internet or be photographed/recorded by staff in the service (Govt. of Ireland 2016). This too, places increasing responsibilities on the manager who must ensure that, upon recruitment, and through regular supervision and training practices, staff working directly with children have the capacity to promote their safety, as well as their educational and developmental needs (TUSLA 2018a). They must also ensure that a restricted number of people can view/listen to content regarding children in their service, and safeguard their access to the internet through appropriate supervision and informed consent (Ibid.).

2.11.1 Micro-level Setting Governance

Nine specific regulations within the Early Years Services Regulations, 2016 which are expanded upon in the *Quality and Regulatory Framework* (TUSLA, 2018a) outline the

effective implementation of governance systems in micro-level practice under (see appendix 9). Brian Lee, TUSLA's Director of Quality Assurance states that the QRF promotes "standardisation of practice and consistency in inspection" (TUSLA 2018c, press release). It therefore highlights the complexity of micro-level governance and, outlines the extent of roles, responsibilities and practices required of an ECCE manager. These include:

- The effective operation of a service through the establishment of effective management structures with a clear system of authority and accountability in place
- Clear and consistent communication of staff member's roles and responsibilities, including that of person(s) in charge, and ensure that a well-established administrative process is in place
- Each person working directly with children is suitable and competent in performing their roles by means of a minimum Level 5 QQI qualification in ECCE, and through the provision of training, supervision, and performance evaluation
- The suitability of each adult working directly with children by means of a 'vetting disclosure' and attainment of references for all employees, unpaid workers or contractors under the National Vetting Bureau (NVB) Act 2013 prior to coming in contact with children attending the service.
- Staff recruitment pertains to employment and equality legislation, including the use of research-based human resource practices during the process of recruitment.
- Appropriate supervision of staff by carrying out staff meetings and induction training process in order to ensure clear and effective internal communication and implementation of policies and procedures.

(Govt. of Ireland 2016; TUSLA, 2018a, p.2-9)

There is no doubt these regulations place considerable governance and management responsibilities upon ECCE managers. However, in the absence of support, a qualification requirement or Continuous Professional Development (CPD), it is questionable whether managers have the capacity to engage at the level required by the Early Years Services Regulations 2016.

Regrettably, 6 years after the introduction of the Pre-School Quality Agenda, and 3 years after the introduction of the Early Years Services Regulations, 2016, yet another exposé of poor practice within a chain of ECCE services featured in an RTÉ documentary: *Crèches Behind Closed Doors* in July 2019. This exposé brought a sharp focus to the consistent lack of political attention placed upon management capacity within the sector.

2.12 Crèches Behind Closed Doors: Another Breach of Trust

Moloney (2020) suggests “throughout Ireland, we distanced ourselves from the damning evidence [in Breach of Trust] and, vowed that such practice would never again occur”. However, an RTÉ documentary ‘*Crèches Behind Closed Doors*’ (2019) revealed practices of gross incompetence, negligence and complete dereliction of management duties in a particular ECCE chain. The evidence showed that the ECCE manager in question was in breach of multiple regulations pertaining to health and safety, including unsafe sleep practices for children aged birth to three years, inadequate fire safety measures, a blatant disregard for adult: child ratios and, manhandling and physical abuse of children. The documentary further highlighted the manager’s capacity to address issues within her service. This was seen on numerous occasions, as complains were made from staff directly to the manager regarding breaches of regulations, all of which were ignored. As well as that, audacious governance practices confirmed that one ECCE service in the chain remained unregistered with TUSLA for a shocking 14-month period, and so, were not subject to inspection. Furthermore, TUSLA had received multiple complaints regarding the standard of care provided to children over the course of the 14 months during which the service was unregistered (Hegarty 2019). Therefore, in spite of their statutory role to enforce proceedings against the service for this serious breach of regulation, TUSLA permitted the service in question to remain in operation. Overall, in the case of *Crèches Behind Closed Doors*, there were significant failings at both a macro-governance and micro-governance level

Commenting on the documentary, Brian Lee, Director of Quality Assurance at TUSLA considers that “what underpins a service is a good manager [and] good governance in a service and if that’s lacking, the service will never be successful” (2019). However, as stated, for decades, the Government overlooked the need for management qualifications or training. Is it therefore reasonable for TUSLA or Government to expect ‘good managers’ and ‘good governance’? In spite of the ever-expanding role of the ECCE manager, it is worrying to note that in 2020, nothing has changed Vis a Vis qualification requirements or support for managers.

2.12.1 Professional Regulation

In considering TUSLA’s role in assuring quality across service provision, Brian Lee (2019) identifies the lack of “professional regulation” within the sector. Discussing the

malpractices shown in *Creches Behind Closed Doors*, he identifies professional regulation as a strong contributor to staff compliance with regulations, and compares the medical and social work profession to ECCE, in terms of the systems in place for a professional body,

Currently if you're a social worker or a doctor or a nurse, you have to register with a professional body and adhere to certain standards, and if you breach them, you'll be taken to fitness to practice and you could be deregistered as an individual (Lee 2019, 0:14:16)

As outlined, these professional bodies regulate the professionals themselves as opposed to the service in which they practice, e.g., the Irish Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland, CORU, Irish Association of Social Workers and the Teaching Council of Ireland. Calling for the establishment of professional body for the ECCE sector in Ireland, Moloney and McKenna (2017) assert that the absence of such a body is largely underpinned by the perceived unprofessional nature of the sector, as well as the consistent fragmentation at policy level.

It is considered that the myriad of titles used to describe those working with children in the sector (Madden 2012; Moloney 2010; 2011) along with the 500+ qualifications, from 37 countries, deemed appropriate to comply with regulations and funding programmes (DCYA 2019c) make it ever more difficult to determine the professional status of early years practitioners. However, Moloney and McKenna (2017) consider the establishment of an Early Years Council as a solution to the fragmented nature of macro-level governance and the abundance of qualifications within the sector. They argue that such a council would provide a single overarching body, which would hold responsibility for the assessment of qualification levels, and fitness to practice. Tanya Ward (2019), the CEO of Children's Rights Alliance (CRA) also considers fitness to practice in her discussion on the malpractices uncovered in *Crèches Behind Closed Doors*. In common with Moloney and McKenna (2017), while commenting on the absence of a "professionalisation body for people working in these centres" she states that "there's no way to strike off the manager of the centre for some of the behaviours that [were seen in the RTÉ documentary]" (Ward 2019, 00:24:21). The establishment of a professional body would bear great significance for governance and quality within the sector as, in a sense, membership acts as self-governance by issuing a licence to practice, reverting the responsibility of compliance with specific sectoral regulations and practice standards to the professional themselves (Moloney and McKenna 2017).

None the less, Moloney and McKenna (2017) caution that any attempt to establish an early year's professional body may be perceived as another layer of bureaucracy and, increased downward pressure on managers in an already stretched sector. However, drawing upon the views of Moloney and Pettersen (2017) and Moyles (2006), 'change agents'/ 'culture setters' i.e. managers are better able to influence staff to embrace societal and political change. Therefore, rendering ECCE managers as influential actors in the formation of a professional body and the key to sectoral development and change (Pascal, Bertram and Cole-Albäck 2020). As recognition of the need for a professional body gathers momentum in Ireland, three organisations: PLÉ: the Irish Association of Academics in ECCE in Higher Education, the Association of Childcare Professionals and SIPTU have come together to facilitate consultation on the establishment of such a body in the Irish context (SIPTU 2019b, press release).

2.13 National Childcare Scheme

The establishment and implementation of the National Childcare Scheme (NCS), in November 2019 sees further downward governmental pressure and expansion of the manager's role. The NCS is a single scheme of subsidised childcare for children aged 6 months to 15 years (DCYA 2019d). Funding is provided through an hourly grant structure, meaning that parents apply with the number of childcare hours required by them, and are subsequently awarded with hourly-based subsidies (Ibid.). Because it is underpinned by legislation (i.e., the Childcare Support Act 2018), which guarantees financial support to parents towards the cost of ECCE, it has been described as a landmark development (DCYA 2019e). In terms of the manager's roles and responsibilities, the DCYA (2019d) suggest that the NCS lessens the administrative burden, as it no longer requires the accumulation of parental paperwork for subsidy applications. Interestingly, the contractual arrangements (see appendix 8) of the NCS does everything except lessen the burden of administrative duties for ECCE managers.

In fact, the legislative management and governance responsibilities of the scheme require stringent financial accountability and effective oversight of subsidy payments, reporting of children's attendance on a weekly basis, an in-depth knowledge of the schemes registration process and online platform, and strong partnership with parents (DCYA 2019d). Furthermore, in accordance with the contractual requirements of the

NCS, the manager's role has extended once again, involving a parent mediation-based role. Therefore, they must collaborate with the parent to obtain a Childcare Identifier Code Key (CHICK) which is used to register the child for a subsidy under the Scheme (DCYA 2019d). Upon receipt of this CHICK from the parent, agreements can be made regarding the manner of childcare provided to them. However, in terms of the extent of administration, nothing has changed. As such, the manager must record each child's daily attendance and submit a reporting return on the administration portal, the Early Years Hive, each week in respect of the previous week (DCYA 2019d). Failure to do so results in suspension of subsidy payments (Ibid.), which again, exacerbates downward governmental pressures on ECCE managers.

2.14 Core Management Roles and Functions

It is apparent that managers fulfil a multiplicity of roles many of them identified by Moloney and Pettersen (2017) in terms of role specific knowledge of ECCE policy and legislation, employment legislation, administration, human resource management, physical resource management, financial accountability, curriculum oversight, collaboration with parents, decision-making, performance management, and the general ability to operate a business. These components of management, together with appropriate structures of accountability, oversight, authority, guidance and responsibility culminate in an effective governance and management structure within a service (Maloney 2016; Moloney and Pettersen, 2017; TUSLA 2018a). The following sections, which begin with a discussion of change management, outlines a range of core management roles and responsibilities, identified across the literature.

2.14.1 Change Management

Moloney and Pettersen (2017) consider "change management" (p.146) as a core management skill where managers hold the professional confidence to incorporate and implement societal and political change at a practice level, with the purpose of improving quality, performance and outcomes. Change management in an Irish ECCE management context is critical as managers grapple with enormous changes resulting from regulatory and sectoral reform throughout the past two decades. For example, managers have had to manage changes associated with introducing the practice frameworks *Síolta* (CECDE 2006) and *Aistear* (NCCA 2009), as well as motivating and

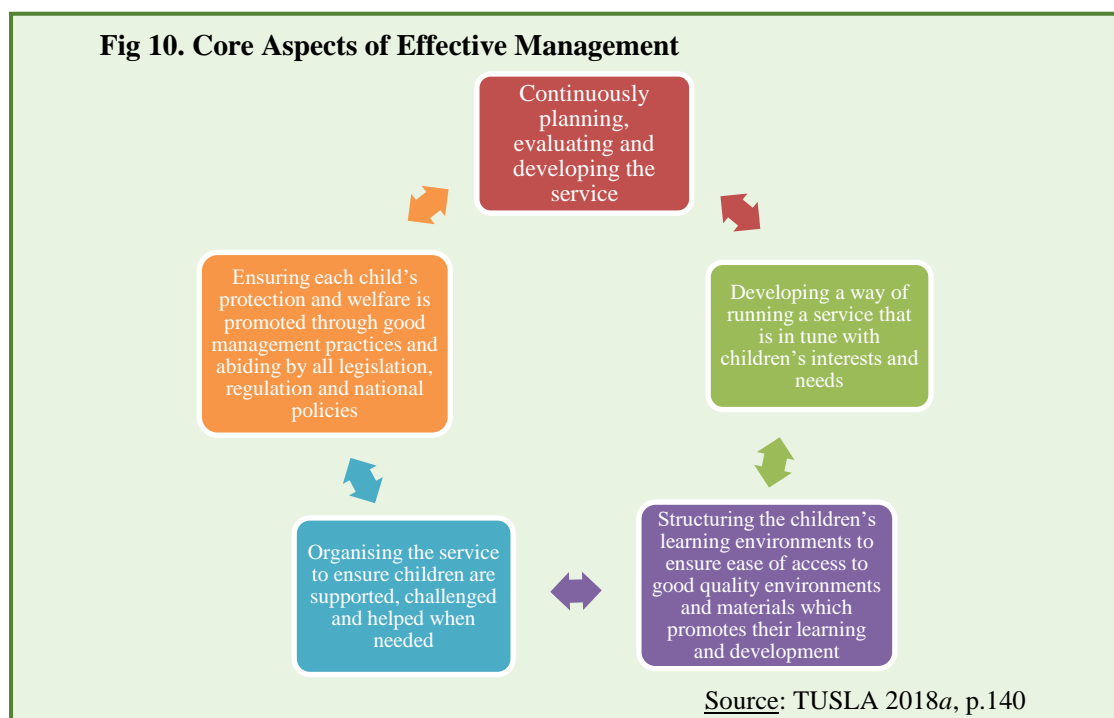
encouraging staff to upskill to meet the qualification requirements of the ECCE scheme and the mandatory requirements introduced under the Early Years Services Regulations, 2016. Thus, as noted by Moloney and Pettersen (2017), the ability to manage change is therefore a core management competence.

2.14.2 Implementing Legislation

Without doubt, the Early Years Services Regulations, 2016 play a key role in determining the manager’s role. Against the backdrop of these regulations, and as identified by Moloney and Pettersen (2017), managers are required to establish effective management structures, engage in rigorous and transparent recruitment practices, as well as providing staff training, supervision and appraisal, all in the absence of training or support. Hence, the registered provider must:

Ensure that **an effective management structure is in place**, and **appropriate people are recruited to ensure the quality and safety of the care** provided to the children attending the service...ensure that **staff are competent to perform their roles** by **providing appropriate training, supervision and performance evaluation.**
(TUSLA 2018a, p.2)

Moreover, TUSLA assert that “effective management” is a way of running a service to the highest standards of safety and care to create a child-centred and safe service (2018a, p.2). Effective management therefore achieves a multitude of staff behaviours (see appendix 16) which are conducive to a high quality and compliant service (Ibid.). Figure 10 provides an overview of the core aspects of effective management from a TUSLA perspective.



As indicated, the ECCE manager ensures that appropriate in-service governance structures are implemented and adhered to. In doing so, they acknowledge the relationship between policy and management, and the central role of the manager in implementing and complying with policy and legislation. They also underscore the need for managers to hold comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the roles and responsibilities as determined by TUSLA (see Figure 12). However, where do managers gain this role specific knowledge and understanding? Currently, there is no mandatory management specific training requirement for ECCE managers. In fact, it seems that from a Government perspective anyone can manage a service. Yet as determined and discussed throughout this chapter, the management role is complex and multi-faceted requiring skill, knowledge and expertise across multiple areas.

2.14.3 Human Resource Management

In accordance with the provisions of the Early Years Services Regulations, 2016, ECCE managers are now legally required to set out the procedures and systems of hiring employees including their job description and terms of employment along with a description of the associated interview process (TUSLA 2018*b*). In line with the services recruitment policy, a manager must ensure that:

All recruitment is in line with **employment and equality legislation**...[and] ensure that recruitment and selection processes are informed by **evidence-based human resource practices** (TUSLA 2018*a*, p. 120)

These legislative requirements, which place a considerable human resource management responsibility upon managers, further compound the complexity of the manager's role. These essential management and governance skills are not necessarily instinctive, nor do they form part of the currently required minimum QQI Level 5 qualification in ECCE.

Interestingly, as the State seeks to enhance the professionalisation of the sector in Ireland, it has developed *Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines for Initial Professional Education (Level 7 and Level 8) Degree Programmes for the Early Learning and Care (ELC) Sector* (PACG) (DES 2019). The PACG consider management and leadership knowledge as an essential element of undergraduate degree programmes (see Table 2).

Table 2. Essential Programme Content for Professional Awards in ECCE relative to Management

Knowledge	Practices	Values
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of leadership and management in Early Childhood Education and Care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedagogical leadership in support of the learning, well-being and development of all children • Co-ordination of the effective operation of a sustainable, ethical and legislatively compliant ELC setting • Implementation of effective and democratic organisational structures and processes • Implementation of innovative, evidence informed policies provision and practice • Effective communication with all stakeholders and partners in the learning well-being and development of children. • Support and supervision of all staff and students in support of their personal and professional development • Respectful engagement with evaluation, monitoring and accountability processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical, democratic leadership that promotes sustainable development

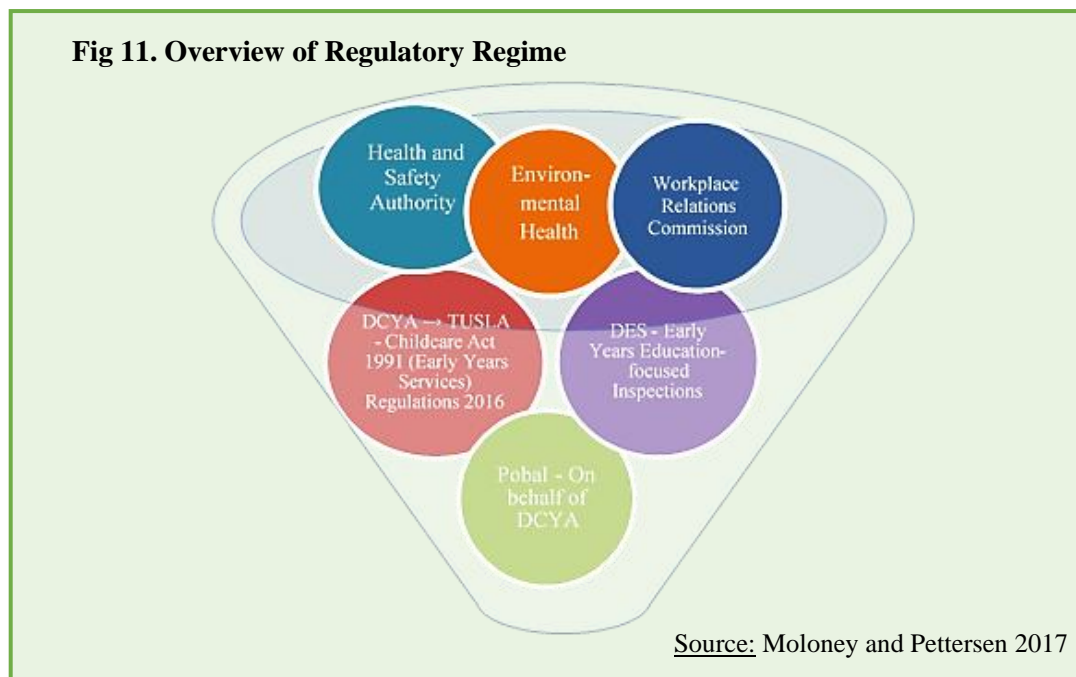
Source: DES 2019

Informed by research from a multitude of different studies including the *CoRe Report* (Urban et al. 2011; 2012) and the *Workforce Development Plan for ECCE* (DES 2010), the PACG seeks to bring oversight into the structure, content and consistency of undergraduate ECCE degree programmes as well as outcomes and experiences of students undertaking such training (DES 2019; Moloney 2018b). Drawing upon the *CoRe Report* (Urban et al. 2011; 2012), these guidelines outline the knowledge, practices and values which are essential for those working in the ECCE sector. The intention is to support the development of a graduate led workforce that will be “fully prepared to take on the complex challenges of practice in this field” (DES 2019 p.8).

2.15 Support for ECCE Managers

Clearly, the increase in State supported childcare through the ECCE Scheme and the NCS, along with an increased focus on quality provision through the Early Years Services Regulations 2016 and various statutory inspection regimes has brought about a surge in accountability and governance demands, which, in turn, have major

implications for roles and responsibilities of the ECCE manager. Both Moloney (2018a) and the DES (2018b) attribute much stress experienced by managers to the current inspection regime. Likewise, in their *Review of the First Year of the Implementation of EYEI Inspections*, the DES (2018b) highlight manager’s attitudes to the current inspection regime. Accordingly, one ECCE manager noted how all three inspectorates (POBAL, the DES and TUSLA) “look for different things” (p.23). The conflicting requirements and recommendations from each inspection process represents a fractured system, which is not conducive to effective management. Figure 11 illustrates the range and volume of inspections that measure compliance with a range of legislation.



Noting the comment of one ECCE manager “if the inspection reports could be collated in such a way that all three [TUSLA, DES, POBAL] were done in one inspection it would be great” (p.23), the DES (2018b) suggest that managers would welcome the establishment of a streamlined system of monitoring and inspection. This indicates that the DES at least recognises the burden placed on managers in terms of the extensive paperwork required for multiple inspections. In this context, it is prudent to suggest a single inspection system that would reduce these administrative pressures. Managers have also called for “more supports for owner managers, for example, with administration work and with management training” (DES 2018b p.22), thus signifying a desire within the sector for increased support.

Although initially established to coordinate childcare at local level, the role of the CCC's has expanded considerably since 2000, and now includes support, training and advice for ECCE managers and staff (Moloney 2014a; POBAL 2019c). The CCC's (funded by the DCYA), are the first port of call for managers when support or information is required regarding any aspect of running an ECCE service including CPD, networking, capital grants etc. (POBAL 2019c). They also act as a local support for childcare services in the provision of information regarding the administrative aspects of DCYA funding programmes (Ibid.). While beneficial, the support provided to managers through the CCC's represents a minimal effort on the part of the State to build management capacity. Other than the establishment of the CCCs in 2000 and the introduction of the programme support payments in 2019, ECCE managers, who have experienced an exponential increase in their responsibilities between 1996 and 2019, have received limited State support. In looking to our nearest neighbour, the UK, it seems that some attempt has been made to prepare and support managers for their role. The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage in England requires managers of group settings to hold a minimum Level 3 Early Years Educator qualification (equivalent to a QQI Level 5 in Ireland) and have a minimum of two years' experience working in an ECCE service (Department for Education (DfE) 2017). While such a qualification requirement goes some way in supporting managers, the suitability of the training to prepare managers for their complex and demanding position is questionable. Miller and Cable (2011) and, Nutbrown (2012) for instance, describe it as basic, suggesting it is insufficient in content and standard. Accordingly, many managers in the UK continually cite a lack of management skills in the area of business and leadership as a significant issue, and in common with Miller and Cable and Nutbrown, suggest that this current qualification fails to adequately prepare them for their challenging role (Children's Workforce Development Council 2011). In reviewing the current early years qualifications in the UK, Pascal, Bertram and Cole-Albäck (2020) acknowledge the important role that managers play in how setting staff perceive higher-level training and professional development. Thus, from a UK perspective, managers are considered "gatekeepers to the development of a better qualified and skilled workforce" (p.25). Indicating that managers are the key to the sector's development and change, Pascal et al. (2020) call for managers to undergo training to raise standards across the sector and to highlight the importance of qualifications for all staff who work with young children.

Research acknowledges the inextricable link between management and quality provision (e.g., Moloney and Pettersen 2017; OECD 2012; Rodd 2013; Urban et al. 2012; Urban 2014). While the macro-level governance structures within Ireland's ECCE legislative landscape dictate the manager's roles and responsibilities, it has consistently overlooked the need for management competency at a micro-setting level. As noted by Urban et al. (2017) a competent system of management and governance requires shared knowledge[s], practices and values from all members of an ECCE system, including levels of government. It is clear that a system of macro governance, which overlooks the fundamental relationship between management and governance and quality ECCE provision, is not conducive to creating a high-quality competent system of micro-level governance within services.

2.16 Challenges Associated With ECCE Management in Ireland

Beginning in Chapter One, this study has consistently highlighted the policy and practice landscape in which ECCE management occurs. It is evident that this landscape creates a challenging management environment. Vis a Vis regulatory requirements, while a lack of State support is also problematic. As mentioned, Ireland's public spending on ECCE is the second lowest of 28 OECD member countries, at just 0.2% of GDP (OECD 2019a, SIPTU 2019a), resulting in a staffing and sustainability crisis in the sector.

2.16.1 Financial Sustainability

A report by Early Childhood Ireland (ECI), *Doing the Sums* (2016), provides an analysis of the cost of running a childcare service in Ireland. The report suggests that on average, both private and community services operate on a breakeven basis, with 60% to 80% of operational costs attributable to staff wages. In fact, the report conveys that services are being pushed towards ECCE-only provision in order to maintain viability. The reason being that funding provided through the ECCE Scheme poses challenges in sustaining childcare for those children in the birth to 3- age cohort (Ibid.). ECI (2016) further suggest that, in line with the move to ECCE-only provision, there is an increase in precarious 38-week contracts in keeping with the contractual requirements of the ECCE scheme. This poses significant challenges for the workforce as it leads to the

growing casualisation of the sector (The Irish Congress of Trade Unions 2016). Accordingly, ECCE staff are employed on insecure part-time contracts, and must sign on to the Live Register during the holiday weeks (i.e., Christmas, Easter, Summer), during which time State funding is not granted (Joint Committee on Children and Youth Affairs 2017).

Issues are also observed with the allocation of funding through the NCS. As mentioned, this scheme provides subsidies to parents towards the cost of childcare. However, as subsidies are provided on an hourly basis rather than the fixed-time basis as with the ECCE Scheme, they are incompatible with the budgeting of staff wages and other costs related to running an ECCE service (Wayman 2019). While the DCYA see the scheme as responding to parents' flexible childcare needs (DCYA 2019*d*), it does not address the long-term sustainability of services (Wayman 2019). In late 2019, the viability of ECCE services was further undermined as ECCE insurance costs dramatically increased following the withdrawal of Ironshore Europe from the Irish ECCE insurance market, resulting in some insurance premiums doubling (Clarke and McCárthaigh 2019). This forced providers to either increase their fees, reduce staff or close their services (SIPTU 2019*c*).

Although financial sustainability has been a continuing issue for ECCE service from the beginning, the current COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates these challenges like never before. In an attempt to limit the spread of COVID-19, the Irish Government issued a directive to close all schools, ECCE services and 3rd Level colleges and universities with immediate effect on the 12th of March 2020. The imposed lockdown remained in place until June 29th. Upon the nationwide opening of services on June 29th, 93% of ECCE service providers stated that they would face significant financial difficulties, while just 60% of services indicate that they will be open in September 2020 (Irish Examiner 2020; McConnell 2020). In fact, during March and April alone, TUSLA was notified by seven services of their intention to close (Zappone 2020). COVID-19 has placed ECCE service providers in extremely precarious financial situations, as uncertainty exists around staff returning to settings upon re-opening, as well as families needing, wanting, or being able to afford their childcare service in the future (Daly, 2020).

During this uncertain and difficult time for the sector, the DCYA undertook significant financial interventions to promote staff retention, mitigate the loss of parental fees and

safeguard the viability of ECCE business' (Parliamentary Budget Office 2020). On the 26th of March, the DCYA announced the introduction of a financial support package specific to ECCE sector staff, called the Temporary Wage Subsidy Childcare Scheme (TWSCS). This scheme allowed for a top-up to the Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme and ensured that approximately 30,000 ECCE staff received a minimum of €350 per week, regardless of their pre-pandemic net income (Parliamentary Budget Office 2020). The sector was therefore temporarily nationalised, as the State paid staff salaries in their entirety between Mid-March and June 29 (Moloney 2020).

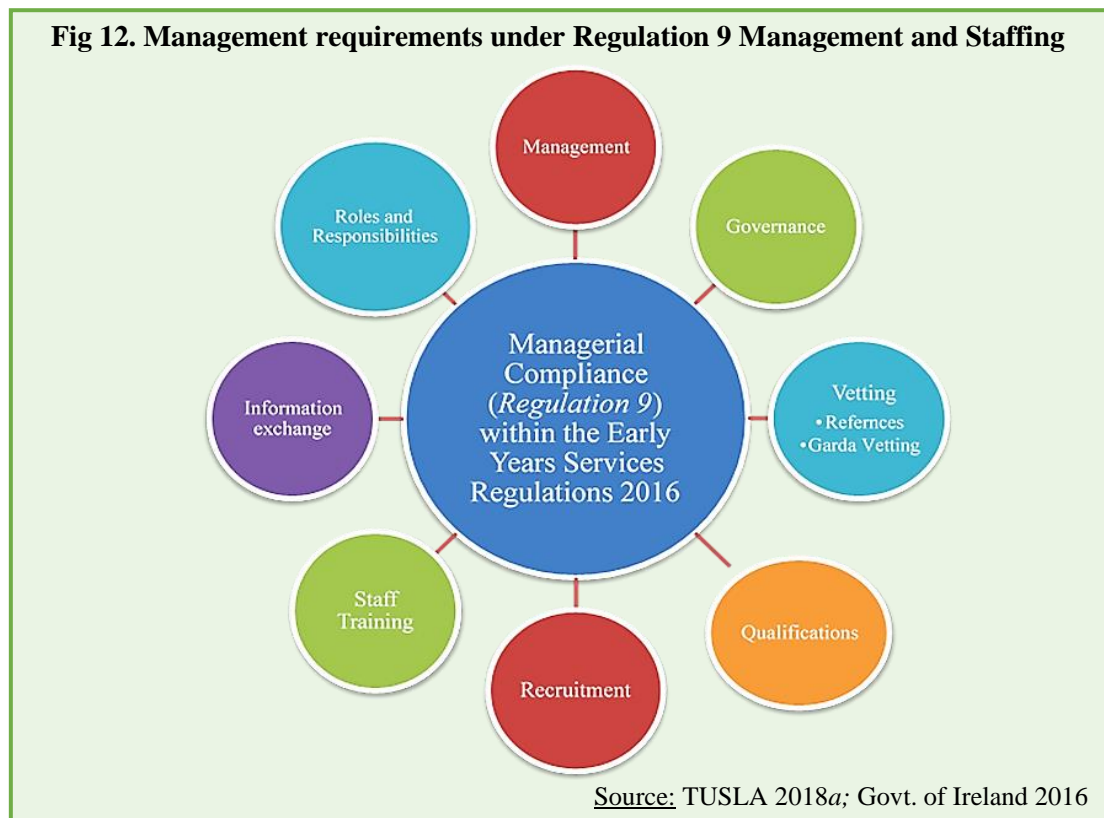
2.16.2 Staffing Crisis

In terms of staffing, Moloney (2019a) suggests that early years educators do not enjoy the professional status bestowed on other educational professionals such as primary school teachers. It seems that in the main, the lack of professional status is underpinned by the characterisation of ECCE as a low salary profession (Barry and Sherlock 2008; Fine-Davis 2007; Moloney 2019a; Moloney 2019b). The Irish State are significantly underspending on ECCE and have sacrificed staff working conditions in favour of access and affordability for parents (Moloney 2020). This has led to the emergence of undervalued, poorly payed, and overworked educators who are disparaged by precarious contracts and poor working conditions (Moloney 2019b; SIPTU 2019a). Indeed, ECI suggest that those working in ECCE “would get paid more walking into a supermarket with no qualifications” (2019, online).

Consequently, a staffing crisis exists within the sector, creating significant issues for managers regarding the recruitment and retention of staff. POBAL (2019a) for example, reports that 23% of services overall had staff vacancies in 2018, with 46% of full day care providers having such vacancies, and a shocking 53% of services had difficulties in recruiting staff in the previous 12 months. According to SIPTU (2020), of 1,000 ECCE staff surveyed, over 38% indicated their intention to work in a different service or leave the sector completely within twelve months. Thus, forecasting a sharp increase in the inordinately high rate of attrition within the sector. Is it, therefore, a surprise to learn that this deepening low pay crisis could inevitably result in a mass exodus of staff from the sector? Given that appropriate working conditions are key to the development of a competent system (Urban et al. 2011), it further reinforces the notion that the Irish Government oversees an incompetent system of ECCE.

2.16.3 Absence of Management Training

As illustrated throughout this chapter, management skills and competencies have been consistently overlooked throughout the history of ECCE regulation and reform. Figure 12, Regulation 9 – Management and Staffing of the Early Years Services Regulations 2016 (Govt. of Ireland 2016), provides an expansive list of management requirements and governance responsibilities. These various requirements clearly underscore the need for a knowledgeable and well-prepared ECCE manager.



Furthermore, as outlined in this chapter, considerable demands are placed upon ECCE managers who receive minimal government support and are not required to undertake CPD or obtain qualifications. There is no question that the structures of governance and management within ECCE services directly affects the overall care and education of children as evidenced in RTE’s 2013 and 2019 documentaries. Thus, the quality of an ECCE service is symptomatic of its standard of governance and management.

2.17 Juxtapositioning Ireland's Micro-Level Governance within an International Context

As mentioned in *Part 1*, Luxembourg's system of ECCE sees the amalgamation of both the childcare and education sectors under the departmental auspices of the Ministry for Education, Children and Youth. Overall, Luxembourg's 0.6% GDP investment into ECCE (3 times greater than Ireland's investment) not only values the imperative role of ECCE in supporting children's learning and development in the early years, it also makes ECCE an attractive career choice by supporting the development of an educated, experienced and professional workforce (OECD 2015; OECD 2017). Accordingly, Luxembourg's ECCE staff profiles indicate that they are among the best paid in Europe, with both pre-primary and primary school teachers on a starting salary of €63,000 (68,000 USD) (OECD 2015). These teachers have undergone 4 years of induction training and a state exam, leading to a bachelor's degree, and are obliged to undertake regular CPD (Honig and Boch 2017; OECD 2015). By comparison, ECCE staff in Ireland work within the context of a staffing crisis and low pay (SIPTU 2020). They are in fact, amongst the lowest paid of all professional groups, earning on average just €12.55 per hour or €25,410 per year (POBAL 2019a). In fact, degree holders at QQI Level 7 and 8 who have attended higher education for 3 and 4 years respectively, earn between €13.93 and €13.45 per hour (Ibid.).

This represents a clear acknowledgement by Luxembourg that sustainable funding is required to recruit and retain competent and qualified staff who are key to the development of high-quality services. Thus, representing a competent system of macro governance with shared knowledge, practices and values through all levels of their ECCE system.

2.17.1 Australia

Similar to the QRF in Ireland, the Australian *National Quality Framework (NQF)* sets out quality standards and operational requirements which must be followed to improve and maintain quality education and care provision in ECCE and afterschool services (ACECQA 2020). These standards are embedded within the Australian Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs 2011). Governance and Leadership at service level, is one such quality area identified within the *NQF*, recognising that

governance contributes significantly to the operation of a quality service, and leadership builds a positive organisational culture and professional community (Ibid.). A number of legislative requirements are in place for Australian ECCE, enabling providers to effectively govern their services (see appendix 17). The rationale for introducing the *NQF* is rooted in Australia's complex ECCE governance infrastructure.

Prior to 2012, 3 tiers of government with 8 separate State and territory jurisdictions were involved in the development of ECCE in Australia (Moloney and Pettersen 2017). Each individual State and territory had varying requirements for ECCE, which culminated in 9 various regulatory schemes and an overlapping quality assurance regulatory scheme (ACECQA 2016). This led to inconsistent regulation and legislation, and an overlap in a multitude of minimum standards. Qualification and ratio requirements varied across the many jurisdictions, along with differing reporting and administration duties and licencing and monitoring processes (ACECQA 2016). The *NQF* offers a single legislative system which contains a streamlined structure of quality standards including national qualifications, national curriculum frameworks ('Belonging, Being and Becoming' for the early years and 'My Time, Our Space' for afterschool), physical environment standards, regulations and a cohesive independent State agency responsible for monitoring and promoting the application of the *NQF* (ACECQA 2016; 2020). As such, this co-ordinated and cohesive system of macro governance significantly reduces the regulatory administrative burden, and associated administration time and cost that was originally present within micro-level practice (ACECQA 2020).

Given the split system of governance, regulation and inspection that currently exists in Ireland, there is much to learn from Australia's shift from a significantly divided macro ECCE governance to an integrated structure. A cohesive and single legislative system for all ECCE services, as proposed within the single agency *Childcare Ireland*, would significantly reduce the administrative burden that is evidenced as a major time-consumer and contributor to stress within the sector (Moloney and Pettersen 2017; Oke 2019). It would therefore make the implementation and translation of policy and legislation more manageable (Moloney and McKenna 2017; Walsh 2016).

2.18 Conclusion

Despite the establishment of the DCYA in 2011 which aimed to streamline the coordination of ECCE policies, Ireland's ECCE governance system remains "highly fragmented with a multitude of actors" (Urban et al. 2017, p.10) with "no one Department or Agency... given clear responsibility to lead integrated policy or to provide coherence across the various childhood bodies or services" (p. 23). These fractious foundations upon which the Irish ECCE sector is built have resulted in the formation of knowledges, practices and values that are out of step with those in the individual or institutional levels of the sector. Supporting this argument, Moloney (2019a) considers that lackadaisical political will and chronic underinvestment has resulted in low wages, high turnover, diversity in qualifications and marginalisation of the professional standing of staff. Thus, epitomising the lack in cohesive knowledge, practices and values of macro-level government departments.

In the context of the present study, the critical relationship between management and quality ECCE provision has not permeated the levels of governance responsible for policy formation, resourcing and regulation (Urban, Cardini and Romero 2018). Thus, the limited policy focus on the complex and demanding role of the ECCE manager, specifically the absence of support, a training requirement or CPD, hampers the development of a competent and collaborative system seen as "key to providing quality early childhood education and care for all children" (Urban et al. 2019, p. 10).

Chapter 3

Research Methods and Study Design

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research paradigm and provides the rationale for utilising a qualitative methodology. It discusses the conceptual framework underpinning the study as well as the sampling techniques and participant selection. It identifies and discusses the ethical considerations associated with the study and the steps taken to minimise risk. The chapter further explains how the primary research data was analysed and explores issues of research validity. Finally, the chapter outlines limitations of the research study.

3.2 Research Paradigm

In educational research, the term paradigm describes a researcher's comprehensive belief system and their 'worldview', that guides research and practice in a field (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Willis 2007). Different types of research are based on different sets of beliefs (Killam 2013). As such, each differing paradigm contains its own individual views and approaches to research (Scotland 2012) and, the paradigm chosen by a researcher determines their view of the world (Killam 2013). From the outset, this research study: *Ideology vs. Reality – An Exploration of the Relationship between Governance and Management, and Quality Early Childhood Care and Education Provision* has been concerned with making meaning from the "individual lived experience[s]" (Marshall and Rossman 2006, p.55) and perspectives of the research participants (Creswell 2014, Braun and Clarke 2013). It is therefore, positioned within an interpretive stance and is qualitative in nature, using the viewpoint of the subject being studied.

By contrast, the positivist paradigm of quantitative inquiry, also known as the scientific paradigm, involve rigorous clarification, testing and experiments, which provide statistical data (Atieno 2009; Killam 2013; Levers 2013). Thus, while interpretivists believe knowledge is constructed through interaction between the researcher and its participants, positivists believe that knowledge is constructed through objective and observable evidence (Scotland 2013). Therefore, researchers located within the

interpretive and positivist paradigms view the world through different lenses, requiring them to utilise different instruments and procedures to obtain the required data for their particular research study (Atieno 2009). A paradigm comprises four elements: ontology (how one sees and views the world and reality), epistemology (how one thinks about the world), methodology (how one finds out what they want to know) and axiology (how one acts in the world) (Aliyu 2015; Lincoln and Guba 1985)

3.2.1 Ontology

Ontology is the study of existence and the ‘nature of reality’ (Killam 2013; Lincoln and Guba 1985, p.37). It asks, ‘what is reality?’, and is therefore related to the researcher’s beliefs regarding the construction of reality (Killam 2013). The ontological position of interpretivist research is relativism, in which the researcher believes that multiple different realities exist within the phenomenon being studied, and no one reality is greater than another (Neuman 2014; Scotland 2012). The researcher explores these realities, and the meaning ascribed to them through human interaction (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017). Therefore, humans must be the primary data collection instrument (Lincoln and Guba 1985), acting as a key instrument for the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2018). This leads to greater understanding of the multiple realities of a particular phenomenon through participant’s perceptions and perspectives of the world around them (Braun and Clarke 2013; Creswell and Creswell 2018). Such research is “naturalistic” and “raw” (Braun and Clark, 2013 p.33) with no predetermined ideas or pre-existing categories, enabling the researcher to fully engage with the people, situation and phenomenon being studied at a personal level (Patton 2002). Critically, Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that “the knower and the known are inseparable” (p.37) meaning that the research participants are in effect, a natural setting since their “realities are wholes that cannot be understood in isolation from their contexts” (p.39). As the primary data-gathering instrument, the researcher is therefore able to fully understand, respond to and describe the complex interactions that are taking place and, because each research participant has their own perspective, the researcher aims to reconstruct contextualised meaning from the multiple realities that exist (Guba and Lincoln, 1989).

3.2.2 Epistemology

Ontology relates to the concept of epistemology. Like the term paradigm, which has its aetiology in Greek and means ‘pattern’, epistemology too comes from Greek, meaning

'knowledge' (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). Cooksey and McDonald (2019) define epistemology in terms of what counts as knowledge within the world and is concerned with how to acquire and communicate this knowledge. Epistemology therefore asks, 'what and how can I know reality?'. Interpretive epistemology refers to the construction of inter-subjective knowledge, which is produced through interaction as the researcher becomes immersed within the culture of the phenomenon being studied (Scotland 2012; Taylor and Medina 2013). Using the analogy of a fisherman, Taylor and Medina (2013) explain how this is done. In their words, "the interpretive fisherman enters the water, establishes rapport with the fish, and swims with them, striving to understand their experience of being in the water" (p.5). Epistemology therefore, helps the researcher to establish the faith they put in their data, and affects how "you go about uncovering knowledge in the social context that you will investigate (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017, p.27). In other words, the researcher discovers reality through participant's views, their backgrounds and experiences (Creswell 2003; Mack 2010; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). Indeed, McQueen (2002) notes that the interpretivist views the world through a "series of individual eyes... [and choose participants who] ...have their own interpretations of reality to encompass the worldview" (p.55). Furthermore, Creswell and Creswell (2018) states that a qualitative research methodology is used to explore and understand the meaning individuals ascribe to a social or human problem

3.2.3 Methodology

According to Scotland (2012) methodology is the strategy and plan of action that describes "why, what, from where, when and how data is collected and analysed" (p. 9). Methodology therefore asks, 'what procedures can be used to acquire knowledge?'. It outlines the research design, methods, approaches and systems used in an investigation; involving data-gathering, research participants, instruments used, and data analysis (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). When considering the most suitable methodology for a research study, the researcher must ask:

How shall I go about obtaining the desired data, knowledge and understandings that will enable me to answer my research question and thus make a contribution to knowledge? (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017, p .28)

As previously mentioned, within an interpretivist paradigm, there are many different ways of being and experiencing the world. Consequently, the lived experiences of the research participants are central to this study. In effect, rather than requiring statistical data, as associated with a positivist paradigm, this study is concerned with exploring

and clarifying feelings, situations, actions, perceptions and lived experiences of the research participants (Creswell 2014, Kumar 2014). Therefore, rather than numbers, participant's words are central to the research study (Bryman 2008, Creswell, 2014) providing deeper understanding of what is actually done in both observable and non-observable practice, much more than could be obtained from numbers and figures within quantitative research (Silverman, 2013). Indeed, many researchers (e.g., Marshall and Rossman 2006, Braun and Clarke 2013) claim that quantitative research masks these personal experiences and perceptions by means of statistic creation, with little detail obtained from individual participants. Consequently, the present study is underscored by a qualitative methodology, whereby, the researcher took on the role of a "miner" (Kvale 1996, p.3) and a "knowledge excavat[or]" (Mason 2002, p.226) to "explor[e] and understand[] the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell 2014, p.246).

3.2.4 Axiology

Axiology is closely associated with the concepts of epistemology, ontology and methodology. Meaning 'value', axiology is concerned with the researcher's judgements of value and the nature of ethical behaviour and considers how the researcher's own values influence the research process (Killam 2013; Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill and Bristow 2015). Therefore, as the researcher believes in the existence of multiple perspectives of the world (ontology), and knowledge is constructed through human interaction (epistemology), she values personal interaction with her participants (axiology) which in turn, informs her decision to collect data through interviews (methodology). Axiology requires the researcher to evaluate and understand right and wrong behaviour and consider their regard for human values of the research participants (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017). When addressing axiology, the researcher must ask:

What values will you live by or be guided by as you conduct your research? What ought to be done to respect all participants' rights? What are the moral issues and characteristics that need to be considered? ...How shall I conduct the research in a socially just, respectful and peaceful manner? How shall I avoid or minimise risk or harm...? (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017, p. 28)

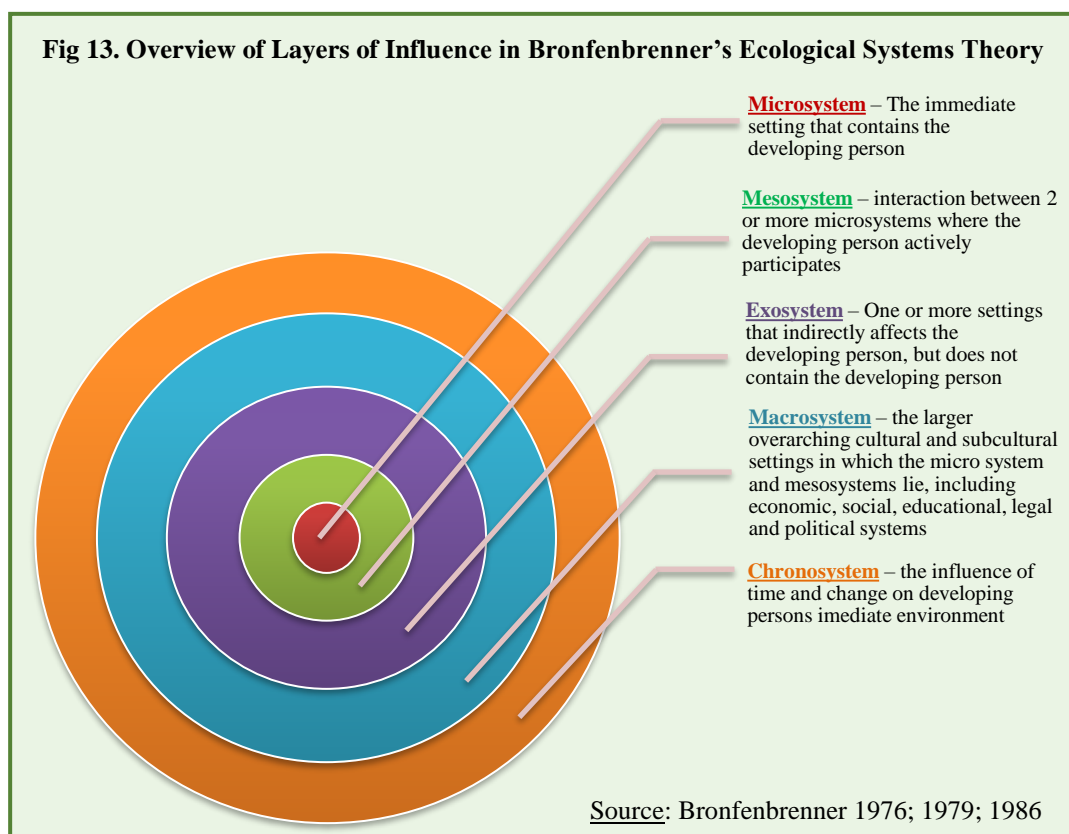
In keeping within the interpretivist viewpoint, the researcher recognises that interpretation of data is crucial throughout the research process. Consequently, she adopted an empathetic stance to understand the world from the participant's point of view (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill and Bristow 2015). She also engaged in a reflexive process, allowing for reflection on the sayings and doings of participants, while

simultaneously reflecting on personal experiences, social position, interpretations, and professional and political beliefs (Berger 2015, Cohen et al. 2019; Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill and Bristow 2016). Later in this chapter, section 3.8 addresses researcher reflexivity, while section 3.9 addresses ethical considerations and steps taken to minimise risk throughout the research process.

3.3 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is used to identify the researcher’s epistemological and ontological lens, and their approach to the phenomenon being studied (Grant and Osanloo 2011). It provides a visual representation of the core research ideas and their associated relationships, bringing clarity and structure to the study (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña 2014) and, is therefore one of the many “mandatory ingredients of quality research” (Adom, Hussein and Agyem 2018, p. 438).

As mentioned in Chapter One, this study utilises Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory as a conceptual framework. This theory outlines how various environmental and social elements affect children’s development and how children are shaped by the world around them (Bronfenbrenner 1979, Paquette and Ryan 2001, Woolfolk, Hughes and Walkup 2013). It therefore comprises multiple overlapping layers of influence as outlined in Figure 13.



In the context of the present study, and as mentioned in Chapter One, the ECCE policy landscape, as determined by macro-level governance, requires the ECCE manager to work within and across multiple different ecosystems (Moloney and Pettersen, 2017). Therefore, within the microsystem, managers work with children, parents and staff. At meso-level, managers facilitate State inspectors and collaborate with support systems such as the County Childcare Committees (CCCs), Better Start, and Membership Organisations (MOs). While at macro-level, they implement policy and legislation developed by legislators and policy developers.

The chronosystem is also critical within this study, as it examines how change over time affects the manager's role, and specifically addresses the significant policy and legislative change since 1996. Bronfenbrenner (1979) also speaks of the relations between micro-level and the other layers of influence within the ecological framework; bi-directional vs. one-way influences. In the context of this study, bi-directional and one-way communication occurs both away from the manager and/or towards the manager (Paquette and Ryan 2001). For example, bi-directional relationships at micro-level sees the ECCE manager's role, and the quality of the ECCE service, being significantly influenced by the quality and availability of staff. However, staff are equally influenced by the quality of management within the service, as well as the terms of employment determined by macro-level ECCE policies. Similarly, managers look to their local CCC's and/or MO's at meso-level for support and guidance on various issues. By provision of such support, the CCC's/MO's reinforce the bi-directional relationships between micro and meso-level.

Accordingly, this study explores how macro-level ECCE governance directly influences the quality of micro-level ECCE practice. As mentioned, Urban et al. (2017) consider co-ordinated macro-level governance as imperative to the effective development of all aspects of ECCE and is essential for building a competent and quality driven ECCE system. However, there is no doubt that inconsistency at macro level in the Irish ECCE system, results in a fragmented and unsustainable system of macro governance with multiple actors and unclear sectoral responsibility (Moloney 2015a, Walsh 2016). A Herculean task therefore rests with Irish ECCE managers to transform the ideology of macro-level governance and management policy from a multitude of governing bodies, into the reality of micro-level practice. This study therefore epitomises the ecological nature of ECCE management and illustrates their relationship with the various levels of influence within the ecological framework of the ECCE sector.

3.4 Data Collection

Qualitative research is typically associated with a diversity of data-collection instruments, including interviews, focus group discussions, direct observation of practice, and written documents (Patton 2002, Kumar 2014). Within the diversity of methods available, individual interviews are the most popular and useful method of data collection (Braun and Clarke 2013, Kumar 2014, Cohen et al. 2018).

Kumar (2014) describes an interview as an interaction that occurs between two or more people, either face to face or through telephone with a particular focus for conversation in mind (Kumar 2014). Likewise, Brinkmann and Kvale (2014) describe it as an “interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest” (p.4) whereas Patton (2002) asserts that interviews allow “us to enter into the other persons perspective” (p.341) and, into their mind to reveal the things that are not directly observable. In qualitative research, interviews fall into three main categories: unstructured, semi-structured or structured in accordance with the degree of flexibility and, with the type of data required by the research (Bell and Walters 2014, Braun and Clarke 2013, Bloom and Crabtree 2006).

Semi-structured interviews are the most common type of interview and, involve the preparation of predetermined, open-ended questions that can deviate and discuss unanticipated issues that arise between the interviewer and interviewee (Bloom and Crabtree 2006; Braun and Clarke 2013; Patton 2002). By contrast, structured interviews are associated with standardised ways of asking questions (Brinkmann 2014), which prevents the interviewer from taking advantage of the dialogical potentials of producing valuable knowledge (Bloom and Crabtree; Brinkmann 2014). This is because the interviewer does not deviate from the scripted questions on the interview guide therefore, producing data that is more quantifiable (Ibid.). This study utilised semi-structured interviews guided by an interview schedule, which enabled interactions between the researcher and interviewee to take on an organic and flexible nature (Tracy 2019). This facilitated participants to “tell a story” (p.47) of their experiences and perceptions of governance, management, and quality ECCE provision in their own words (Patton 2002). In essence, a semi-structured interview stimulates rather than dictates discussion (Tracy 2019).

A series of 15 semi-structured interviews were undertaken with ECCE managers, representatives of the City and County Childcare committees (CCCs) and

representatives of Membership Organisations (MOs) that work with ECCE managers to support them in their role (see Table 3).

Table 3. Overview of Interviews Undertaken

Interviewee	Number of interviews	Sector/Region
Early Childhood Care and Education Managers	10	Leinster: - Community Rural x 3 - Community Urban x 1 - Private Rural x 3 - Private Urban x 3
County Childcare Committee Representatives	3	Leinster/Munster
Membership Organisation Representatives	2	Leinster

A considerable benefit of using interviews relates to its similarities with holding a conversation, with a flexible, fluid and evolving nature (Silverman 2013, Marshall and Rossman 2006, Mason 2002). Consistent with this view, Bell and Walters (2014) declare adaptability as a major advantage of interviews, with an interviewer following up on ideas, drawing out responses and exploring feelings. This is particularly the case when using semi-structured interviews, because of the fluidity of the discussion (Silverman 2013, Marshall and Rossman 2006, Mason 2002).

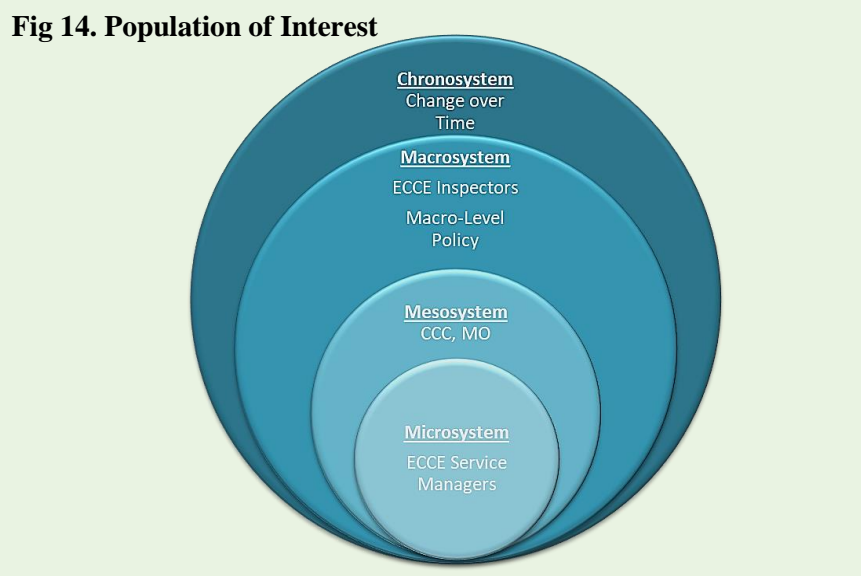
Due to the imminent effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic at the time of data collection (Feb – March 2020) and, because of their busy work schedules at this time, many participants preferred to conduct interviews by telephone, rather than face-to-face. Therefore, 10 of the 15 interviews occurred by telephone. The remaining five interviews were face-to-face encounters. Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) highlight a concern of undertaking telephone interviews in relation to the quality of data collected. On the one hand, telephone interviews facilitated easy access to ECCE managers, CCC and MO representatives who were geographically dispersed across two provinces in Ireland. This was particularly important in the context of travel and social distancing restrictions resulting from the global pandemic. Conversely, it prevented the researcher from seeing the participant’s non-verbal forms of communication, which adds statement and emotion to the data (Creswell 2014). However, although qualitative research generally relies on face-to-face encounters (Sturges and Hanrahan 2004), telephone interviews proved advantageous in the present study, as participants were comfortable discussing sensitive issues such as financial circumstances, and emotional states. Thus, increasing the quality of data and reflecting the reality of micro-level management in ECCE in

Ireland. Consistent with Sturges and Hanrahan (2004), it seems that participants may have preferred the anonymity of a telephone interaction.

3.5 Sampling

Sampling takes place at the introductory stages of the study and involves defining a population from which the research is focused (Cohen et al. 2018). Not every member of the identified population can be included in a research study, and for this reason, the researcher identified participants based on their relativity to the research question. This process, known as purposive sampling, involves the researcher keeping their research goals in mind, when seeking potential participants (Denzin and Lincoln 2005, Bryman 2016). Purposive sampling is useful in situations where limited knowledge exists around certain phenomenon being studied and so, the data must be collected from those in the know (Kumar 2014).

As outlined in Figure 14, the overall population of interest for this study is the ECCE sector in Ireland, comprising managers at micro-setting level, as well as those who support the sector at a meso level, i.e., the population of CCCs and MOs. At a macro-policy level, the population of ECCE inspectors who determine governance and management practices were central to the study, as well as the policy makers (e.g., DES and DCYA) that determine the roles and responsibilities of an ECCE service manager.



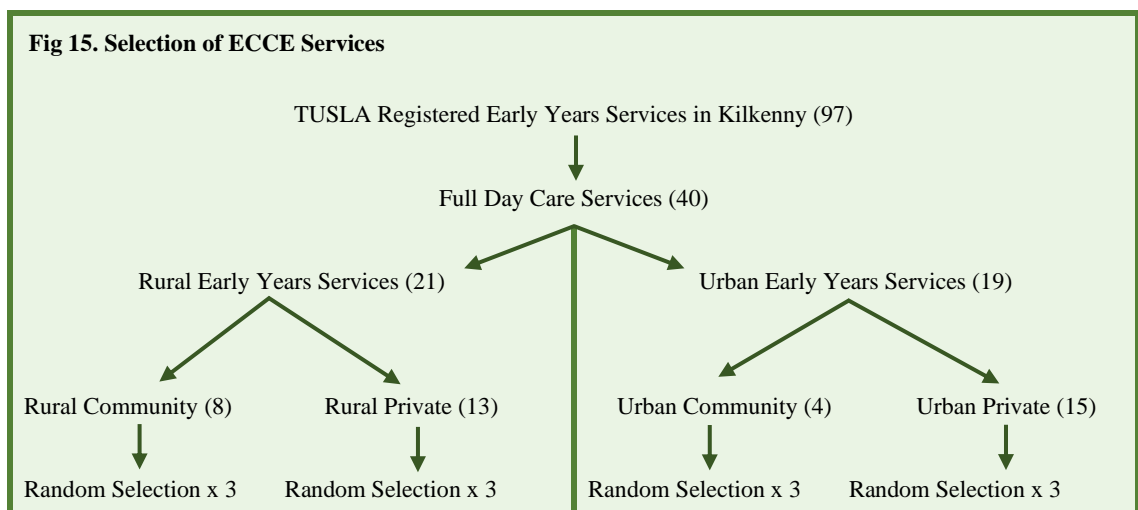
From each population of interest, a purposive sample was chosen as follows:

- 10 ECCE managers from the Leinster region representing both community and private, and rural and urban service provision
- 3 CCC representatives from the Leinster and Munster regions
- 2 MO representatives from the Leinster region.

As discussed in section 3.5.1, each cohort held the requisite knowledge and experience to answer the research question (Creswell and Plano Clark 2018).

3.5.1 Sampling Frame and Participant Selection

From January 2014, ECCE providers must register their service with TUSLA, the Child and Family Agency. While all types of ECCE provision (i.e., sessional, part time, full time, drop-in etc.) are included in the National Register of Early Years Services (www.tusla.ie) the sample in the present study centred upon full day care provision only. The rationale for this decision was to gain a greater understanding of the managerial experiences involved in full day care provision for children aged birth to six years in centre-based ECCE services. Full day care managers in particular would have the full gamut of management experience. The sampling frame comprised all full day services in County Kilkenny on the National Register of Early Years Services. As illustrated in Figure 15, 40 full day care services were isolated from the sampling frame of 97 ECCE services in Kilkenny. Of these 40, 21 services were located in rural areas with the remaining 19 located in urban areas. These subsets were further divided into community and private provision within their respective locations. Three services were randomly chosen from each sample for inclusion in the research study.



In terms of meso-level participants, the CCCs are a key source of support for ECCE managers across Ireland (POBAL 2019c). Therefore, their inclusion in this study is paramount. Drawing upon the list of CCCs nationally, available on the POBAL website (www.pobal.ie) and, using random selection, three CCC representatives were invited to participate in the study. Furthermore, because MOs provide information, advice, support, and training to managers regarding business management, policy and legislative compliance and, sectoral changes, their inclusion in the study was also vital. Two MO representatives were selected by writing to the national manager of the respective organisations requesting their support in circulating an invitation to a representative in the Leinster region.

Chapter Two details how TUSLA's Early Years Inspectorate is responsible for inspecting and assessing regulatory compliance under the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services Regulations) 2016. Within this remit, they inspect management and governance practices at micro-setting level in accordance with the Early Years Services, 2016 (TUSLA 2018a). The DES also undertake inspections of ECCE services to assess the quality of provision for children accessing the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. In addition, Better Start Quality Development Mentors, under the auspices of POBAL, provide information, advice, support and training to service providers and managers regarding the development and implementation of Aistear and Síolta based quality goals and actions (POBAL 2019b). While the DES, TUSLA and POBAL's Better Start were invited to participate in the study, all advised the researcher that because of regulations within State governed bodies, research conducted under third level institutions was not permitted within either organisation. As a result, while Chapter Two provides considerable insight into macro-level policy and its impact on micro-setting level governance and management, from an empirical stance, data relating to inspections, emerged through the accounts provided by the participating managers, CCC and MO representatives.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis transforms data into findings (Patton 2002). It revolves around the preparing of raw data for transcription, the "cleaning" of the data (Kumar 2016 p.255), thematic analysis and coding, resulting in the subsequent reduction of data (Bryman 2008).

In this study, data was thematically analysed, thus organising large amounts of data into smaller categories and themes to bring meaning to the data and, subsequently, creating a story (Cohen et al. 2018, Marshall and Rossman 2006). Thus, Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-step framework for thematic analysis was utilised (see Table 4).

Table 4. Braun and Clarke’s 6 Step Framework for Thematic Analysis

1	Becoming familiar with the data and identifying interesting points
2	Generating initial codes
3	Searching for themes
4	Review and consolidate themes
5	Define and name themes
6	Producing the report

Firstly, interview transcripts were inductively analysed i.e. without pre-existing themes or categories, in order to condense and summarise the raw data through the assignment of codes (Thomas 2006). Subsequently, through the process of coding, a vast body of data was organised into small meaningful chunks of information to create themes, which “capture something important about the data in relation to the research question” (Braun and Clarke 2006 p.10).

At primary level analysis, data is initially summarised to create codes (Elliot 2018) and because “coding is a cyclical act” (Saldaña 2013, p.8), numerous rounds of coding and re-coding were undertaken to reduce and condense the data. Accordingly, initial first round coding yielded 300+ codes across the 15 interview transcripts, which was subsequently reduced to 150 codes following a further 6 rounds of coding involving reading of transcripts and refining and consolidating codes.

Secondary level analysis involves identifying themes in the data (Elliot 2018). At this stage, the researcher consolidated overlapping codes and eliminated redundant codes (Creswell 2014), reducing the 150 codes to 46. As illustrated in Table 5, within these 46 codes, five overarching themes emerged, namely Pathway to Management, Differing Micro-Setting Governance, Core Management Responsibilities, Core Management Knowledge and Skills and Satisfaction with Macro-Governance. Thus, the researcher made connections between the research objectives and emerging findings to create theories regarding the experiences of research participants within the interview texts (Thomas 2006).

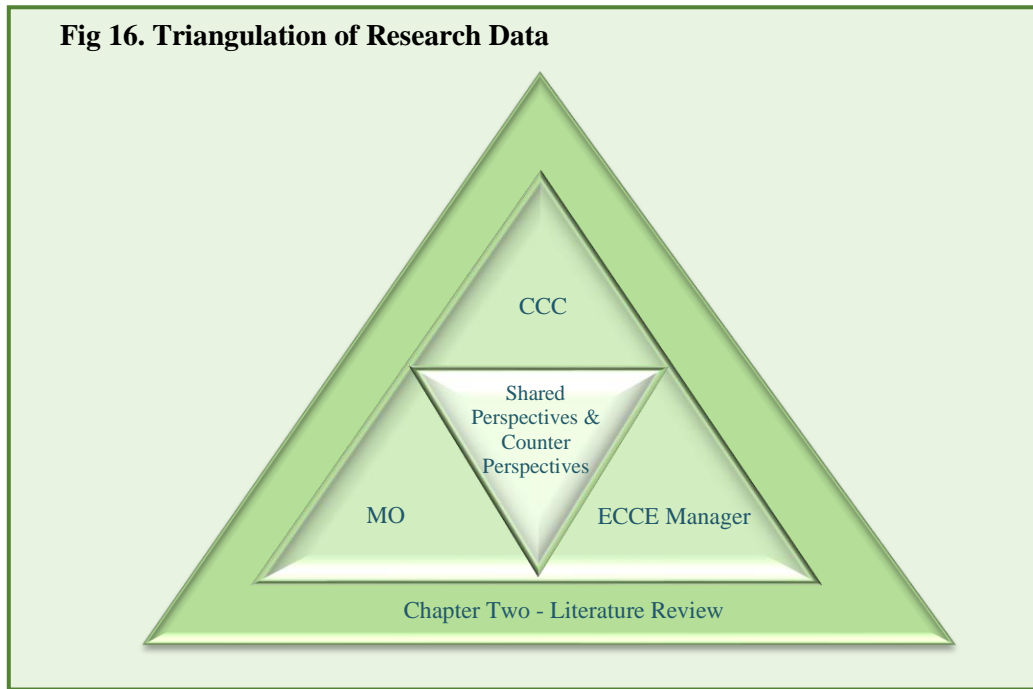
Table 5. Grouping of Codes to Generate Themes

Core Management Roles and Responsibilities	Core Management Knowledge and Skills	Satisfaction with Macro-Governance	Pathway to Management	Differing Micro- setting Governance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibility: Overarching responsibility • Responsibility: Financial management • Responsibility: Business management • Responsibility: Leadership • Responsibility: Policy Compliance • Responsibility: Staff • Responsibility: Children • Responsibility: Parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge: Staff Management • Knowledge: financial management • Knowledge: Business management • Knowledge: Running an ECCE service • Knowledge: ECCE practice • Knowledge: Leadership • Knowledge: Policy Compliance • Knowledge: Organisational skills • Knowledge: IT skills • Knowledge: Delegation • Knowledge: Interpersonal skills • Management training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple Actors • Negative attitude to inspections • Policy demands • Lack of autonomy • Fear of macro • Funding scheme issues • Interpretation of regulations • Lack of consultation • Comparison to other sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management tenure • Past experience • Gradual progression • Accidental Management • Past training • Original intention • Experience of change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community vs. private governance • Support: Board Support • Administrative Support • Board skillset

3.7 Research Reliability and Validity

Validity is the term used to determine whether or not the research methodology, design, findings, and conclusions accurately describe the phenomenon under study (Bush 2012). According to Creswell and Miller (2000), a process known as triangulation establishes validity in a study and is associated with “convergence among multiple and different sources of information” (p.126). Likewise, Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe and Neville (2014) allude to triangulation of data sources where the researcher gathers data from different types of people to gain multiple perspectives. In the present study, multiple data sources involving ECCE managers, CCC and MO representatives facilitated the process of triangulation (see Figure 16).

Fig 16. Triangulation of Research Data



Their perspectives, therefore, were juxtaposed to corroborate or counter opinions regarding ECCE governance and management in Ireland. In addition, locating the findings within the context of Chapter Two further enhances the reliability and trustworthiness of the study. In addition to triangulation, research reliability is influenced by research bias, which renders the study invalid (Bush 2012). Section 3.8 now addresses the issue of researcher reflexivity.

3.8 Researcher Reflexivity

Because researchers bring their biographies to their work, their social position, political and professional beliefs and personal experiences can potentially affect their situatedness within the research, (Berger 2015, Cohen et al. 2019). Consequently, Berger (2019, p.221) describes researcher reflexivity as the “conscious and deliberate effort to be attuned to one’s own reactions to respondents and to the way in which the research account is constructed”. Furthermore, it involves the researcher turning the lens back onto him/herself in order to take responsibility for their situatedness in the study, and how it affects the research in terms of questions asked, data collected, and interpretation (Ibid.). Reflexivity is therefore the “gold standard for determining trustworthiness” within research (Dodgson 2019, p.220).

As a result, the researcher documented her thoughts, feelings, assumptions, and suppositions throughout the research process using a self-reflective journal. In this way, she promoted transparency and consciously engaged in the process of reflexivity. It also provided a method of demonstrating the researcher's understanding of the research process during her role as an interviewer, investigator and, interpreter (Ortlipp 2008). For example, the researcher documented her presuppositions and predispositions prior to conducting her research. She demonstrated self-awareness of her thoughts, emotions and feelings towards the wider research area by definitively stating how;

I have studied and experienced first-hand the problem of under-resourcing within Ireland's ECCE sector, and acknowledge that I have strong feelings and opinions regarding this issue (Reflective Journal, 07/09/2020).

Again, during the interview process, the researcher documented how some participant responses went against her belief system, thus allowing the self-reflective journal to monitor her personal bias. She wrote;

I feel I agree more with those participants that said a management qualification needs to be introduced to the sector. However, I am also conscious of the fact that I have spent a number of years in 3rd Level education and have strong and positive predispositions of qualification attainment. I am therefore acknowledging the value I hold for qualifications, but I will not mis-represent participants who do not agree with my beliefs. I will not lead interview questions to suit my personal bias, nor will I exclude participants contributions because of their views. I will provide and respect all opinions (Reflective Journal, 02/03/2020)

In addition, she used a 'critical friend' to monitor bias and ensure reflexivity and transparency in the research findings. Foulger (2015) claims that a critical friend fills a gap in the researcher's skillset, thus providing an alternative perspective, support, advice and criticism throughout the research process. Appleton (2011) further suggests that a critical friend is "a trusted person who asks provocative questions, clarifies ideas, advocates for the success of the work, and offers a critique of a person's work" (p.4). The researcher's academic supervisor interrogated the data, hypothesizing, deconstructing, and reconstructing the findings, encouraging the researcher to monitor her own bias and be cognizant of her position (Berger 2015, Dodgson 2019), enabling the confirmability and reliability of the findings (O'Leary and Moloney, 2020).

3.9 Ethical Considerations

As mentioned, qualitative inquiry is concerned with real life, personal experiences regarding people's work and lives, thus involving greater reactivity on the behalf of the

researcher (Patton 2002). It is imperative therefore, to address ethical issues along two domains:

3.9.1 Domain 1 – Personal Values

The first domain addresses the researcher's personal values regarding honesty and integrity in both literature searching and data representation (Tracy 2019, Walliman 2011). As noted by Creswell (2014, p.231) the researcher must not “engage in deception about the nature of the study” and, must be conscious of the representation of findings, personal bias, opinions surrounding the research topic and, use of information (Kumar 2011). Furthermore, Patton (2002) considers interviews as interventions, with the purpose of gathering information rather than changing participant's perspectives. Therefore, the following measures helped to address the ethical issues associated with the present study:

- Drawing from the interpretive ontological stance of relativism, the researcher valued the position of all participants and all perspectives and did not value one position over another (Neuman 2014). Therefore, data was selected from all participants to ensure a sense of fair judgement and balance. The researcher ensured that the data was appropriately selected and presented and did not misrepresent the participant's viewpoint to suit the researcher's bias. In addition, participant quotations were judiciously selected based on relevance to the topic being discussed.
- Appropriate presentation of the literature ensures authors' work is not misrepresented to suit the researcher's viewpoint or political/personal bias.
- Appropriate referencing and citation of literature in accordance with the University of Limerick's referencing guide '*Cite it Right*' ensures authors are acknowledged and avoids plagiarism.

3.9.2 Domain 2 – Participant Rights

The second domain is concerned with the participant's rights in terms of informed consent and anonymity, and courtesy to the participants through the practice of procedural ethics (Tracy 2019, Walliman 2011). In this regard, a number of steps were taken to minimise the risks associated with the ethical considerations in this study. Prior to conducting the research, each participant received clear and easily understood

information letters and informed consent forms. The information letter advised of the following:

- An honest account of the study, who is undertaking it and why;
- Voluntary nature of participation and their right to withdraw from the research at any time, without reason or consequence;
- Nature of participation, i.e., a short audio-recorded interview (30 minutes approx.). An assurance that following transcription, all audio files would be deleted;
- Anonymity and confidentiality of data provided by using identification codes during the reporting of research findings. In this way, no research participant, service or organisation can be identified by anyone other than the researcher. In addition, data will be used solely for the purpose of the research study, it will not be shared with any third party, with the exception of the researcher's supervisor who has limited access during analysis only. If the research data is subsequently used for research publications or presentations, identification codes will be used to maintain anonymity and confidentiality;
- Data may be retained indefinitely in accordance with the MIC Data Retention Policy;
- All information is securely stored on an encrypted USB key. Identification codes are stored separately from interview transcripts to further maintain anonymity and confidentiality.

3.10 Limitations

As with any research study, the current study presents with certain limitations, related to sample size, time, and participant availability.

3.10.1 Sample Size

The nature of qualitative inquiry requires careful selection of sample size, which in wider research is not explicitly specified (Patton 2002). Therefore, the small sample size means that findings cannot be generalised to the wider ECCE sector. Nonetheless, the findings from this study provide unique insight into the attitudes, experiences and

perceptions of the participating ECCE managers, CCC and MO representatives in relation to governance and management.

3.10.2 Time

Given the qualitative nature of this study, a vast amount of research data exists. As mentioned, within qualitative data collection, the researcher acts as the key instrument for excavating, analysing and interpreting data (Mason 2002). These processes, in particular transcribing interviews, are labour intensive and time consuming. According to Braun and Clarke (2013), it takes one hour approximately, to transcribe ten minutes of interview material, while MacNaughton, Rolfe and Siraj-Blatchford (2001) note that data analysis takes several days or weeks. In this study, the researcher transcribed fifteen 30-minute (approx.) interviews, equating to 45 hours of transcription and 180 pages of interview data, while data analysis was completed over a 3-month period between March and May 2020. Consequently, time is a considerable limitation in qualitative researcher generally, and in the present study in particular.

3.10.3 Availability of Participants

The availability of research participants has been highlighted as a limitation. From the outset, the original cohort of participants included:

- 12 ECCE managers,
- 3 CCC representatives,
- 3 Better Start Mentors (under the auspices of POBAL),
- 1 DES inspector and,
- 1 TUSLA inspector

However, due to regulations within State governed bodies; research conducted under 3rd level institutions was not permitted within the DES, TUSLA or POBAL. Regrettably, this resulted in the removal of Better Start Mentors and State inspectors from TUSLA and the DES from the research sample. Because CCC representatives obtained clearance from the DCYA to state that their contributions to the research were that of the individual and not of the DCYA, they fortunately, remained within the cohort of research participants.

Furthermore, as outlined above, the original intention was to conduct 12 interviews with ECCE service managers from both rural and urban locations, and private and community provisions. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent national closure of all ECCE services, the two remaining managers were unreachable by telephone/email. In these circumstances, the researcher felt it would be courteous and respectful not to contact any other managers at this time, given the challenging situation in which they found themselves in mid-March 2020. Therefore, the final number of managers included in the study is ten.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter addressed the interpretivist research paradigm and justified utilising a qualitative research methodology. It discussed Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory as a conceptual framework for the study, and provided details regarding purposive sampling, and participant selection. The chapter also explored the ethical considerations associated with the study and described the steps taken to minimise these. The chapter further explained how the primary research data was inductively analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) 6 steps framework of thematic analysis. Finally, this chapter discusses issues of research validity, reflexivity and study limitations.

Chapter 4

Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the research findings of this research study, presenting them as a series of themes as follows:

- Pathway to Management
- Micro-Setting Level Governance
- Core Management Responsibilities
- Core Management Knowledge and Skills
- Attitudes to Macro-Governance

These themes are located within and, discussed against the backdrop of the Literature Review in Chapter Two. Chapter Four begins by exploring the range of management experience held by the ten participating ECCE managers, before progressing to the findings relating to the diverse pathways these managers took to management. It continues to examine the differing governance structures and support systems that exist at micro-setting level. Notably, the findings point to considerable difference in governance structures and support systems across community-based and private ECCE services. The chapter discusses the many management responsibilities identified by all 15-research participants (Managers, CCC and Membership organisation (MO) representatives, which relate directly to a multitude of policy initiatives. It explores the knowledge and skills required by managers as well as the research participant's attitudes towards a potential management qualification. Finally, Chapter Four concludes with an examination of participant's attitudes to the current macro-governance of the ECCE sector, pertaining to areas such as inspections, consultation and funding schemes.

4.2 Pathway to Management

Overall, the management experience of the ten participating managers ranged from three years to 18 years. As illustrated in table 6, while three managers had less than five years management experience (the lowest being three years), and two had six years' experience, the remaining five managers had ten or more years' experience of managing an ECCE service. The manager of a private service (M8-P) was the longest serving manager, having 18 years of management experience.

Table 6. Overview of Management Experience

	Community-based ECCE managers				Private Sector ECCE managers					
Manager:	1 (M1-C)	2 (M2-C)	3 (M3-C)	4 (M4-C)	5 (M5-P)	6 (M6-P)	7 (M7-P)	8 (M8-P)	9 (M9-P)	10 (M10-P)
Management Tenure (Years)	4	12	3	16	16	18	6	3	6	15

Managers repeatedly spoke of their experience of working in the early childhood care and education sector prior to becoming a manager. They articulated how experience influenced their pathway to management. Nine of the ten participating managers had worked directly with children, with private manager 10 (M10-P) for example, having “*worked in the toddler room*”, while manager 3 from a community service (M3-C) “*ran [her] own preschool for over 10 years*” and M6-P “*worked in the sector for about 2 years...working in preschools and crèche*”. By contrast, M5-P did not have an early childhood background; rather she “*was nursing*” prior to becoming an ECCE manager. She described how her age and a back problem lead her into managing an ECCE service; “*One thing led to another... I was coming to an end of it so with my back and what have you... I was getting too old for nursing*”. While she did not hold an ECCE qualification, nor have experience in the field, M5-P became the manager of an ECCE service.

4.2.1 Diverse Pathways to Management

From the perspective of a County Childcare Committee representative (CCC1), the management role has evolved throughout the past 20 years. In her opinion, management happened organically from simple beginnings, progressing to a larger enterprise requiring a different type of management over time.

It kind of went from, you know, primarily women identifying a need in a community, developing a very informal play space for children which developed into a preschool...so, it kind of happened quite organically

However, in common with Moloney and Pettersen (2017) she also referenced the concept of accidental manager, noting that not all management roles were organic, occurring instead through serendipity. In her words, “*you have people who fell into it or people who were working on the ground and then the manager left, and they just became manager overnight*”. In the context of this study, the findings overall, resonate with Moloney and Pettersen (2017, p.41-42) who identified three overarching categories in terms of pathways to management: Management by choice from the outset of their career, management as a natural career progression and management arising from special circumstances. Although the findings in this study evidence each of these pathways to management categories, as discussed,, the most common category relates to management that results from special circumstances.

➤ Management by Choice from the Outset of their Career

The findings indicate that two of the ten participating managers had originally intended to manage a service from the outset of their employment in the sector. In this context, Kendall, Carey, Cramp and Perkins (2012) suggest that because these managers fulfilled a long-term aspiration to work as ECCE managers, they are more likely to undertake pre-service training. Moreover, as suggested by Moloney and Pettersen (2017) suggest these managers look for more responsibility and, show great confidence in their ability. M8-P provided insight into this approach, highlighting her eagerness to take responsibility, when discussing her pathway to management within the private sector:

When I was working in my previous job, a position arose for an assistant manager and I suppose me being me I said okay, I would like to go in, get to grips with it and see what it is like because my long term goal was always to open up my own crèche.

With a similar goal in mind, M7-P described how she progressed from covering maternity leave to owning and managing her own service. In her words, she

Picked up a maternity cover here ... I was 2 years at that [working directly with children] and then, I was a manager for 2 years and then, 3 years ago we set up a

company with the original owner...my goal was always to own and run my own place and, if I couldn't own it, then to be a manager, so I got where I wanted to be.

As discussed in Chapter Two, although there is no statutory requirement for a manager to hold a qualification, M7-P undertook training for her managerial role in 2014.

I completed a level 6 in supervision in early childhood care and education in 2014 when I began my managerial role. I did it on my own accord to ensure I had the knowledge and skills to feel confident in carrying out my new role.

Clearly, this manager wished to acquire the knowledge and skills for management and to feel confident in her role.

➤ Management as a Natural Career Progression

Moloney and Pettersen (2017) suggest that where management results from natural career progression, it emerges from middle management positions e.g. supervisor, room leader. In the present study, two managers illustrated how they gradually progressed from one position to the next throughout their career. Community based manager (M2-C), with 12 years management experience, “*started as a childcare worker, working [his] way up to a supervisor*”. He spoke of his desire to achieve increased influence and autonomy within his role, and decided to pursue a career in management because,

There was a little bit of frustration there that I wasn't able to do what I liked to try... after 12 years there, you know, you just want to try something new...becoming a manager was just the yearning of being able to put my stamp on something and try different things.

Similarly, M10-P, a manager who had previously worked directly with children was “*covering maternity leave for a girl... and then by the time she came back off maternity leave, I actually owned the place*”. She described being motivated by a long-held ambition to get to the top of the career ladder in ECCE and, explained how she “*always would have wanted to go up and up as far as [she] could*”

➤ Management Arising from Special Circumstances

Significantly, the findings indicate that six managers became involved in ECCE management because of special circumstances including a desire to become self-employed and because of a need for their own children to access childcare. Influenced by her experience in “*office positions and administration*” and motivated by her desire “*to be self-employed*” M6-P explains that she “*went back and did the childcare course*” whereas, M5-P (with the nursing background), was motivated to establish an ECCE service because of her own lack of childcare. She explained that because she “*couldn't*

find anyone else to mind [her] own kids” [she] “set up the only childcare facility at the time”.

However, resonating with Preston (2013) and Moloney and Pettersen (2017), four managers assumed their role accidentally rather than deliberately. In each instance, these four managers had never intended to become a manager. In the words of M4-C *“I’ll be honest with you; my ambition was never to be a manager.... I truly enjoyed the work with the children”*. Reflecting upon her role, she feels that *“circumstance and experience pushes you that way [toward management]”*. Her pathway to management had been influenced by spending *“16 years in the children’s centres in Manchester... [doing] home visits...and family support”*. She therefore described how she *“fell into management because I was doing home liaison...*

There was a time when funding was really scarce [and] we were struggling....So the co-ordinator left who was in place at the time...and I acted up...when I was meeting with the board of management, I just said ‘we need to leave it this way for a while and just leave the co-ordinator salary there building up so that we can afford to go forward’...And (laughs) that’s how I fell into that role.

Similarly, M3-C entered management by default. She *“hadn’t really thought about it [management] until it came up”*. However, she *“landed in at the deep end [after] the manager left...so they [Board of Management] offered it to the three supervisors... and I got it”*.

As indicated throughout the findings, these various pathways to management affect how the participating managers work at micro-ECCE setting level.

4.3 Micro Setting-Level Governance

According to POBAL (2019a), 74% of services in Ireland are privately run, while 26% are community-based services run by a Board of Management (BoM). In this study, four managers ran community based ECCE services, with the remaining six managing privately run services.

As illustrated in Chapter Two, although Hanafin (2014) did not distinguish between community and private services, she identified consistent regulatory breaches relating to governance and management across the entire sector. In relation to *Regulation 9 – Management and Staffing* of the Childcare (Preschool Services) Regulations 2006 (DHC 2006), 47% of services were non-compliant (Hanafin 2014). Her report shaped the development of the Early Years Services Regulations 2016, and in particular, informed a focus upon management and governance at ECCE setting level. However, the findings in the present study indicate that, from the perspective of the research participants, these governance and management requirements have not yet filtered down to micro level practice and, continue to be problematic. Therefore, CCC2 noted, *“there seems to be a theme that governance is a challenge and there are issues around governance with services, but there’s no acknowledgement of the supports needed to address it”*. Noting the diversity within the sector, CCC3 noted *“if you look within the sector, all the services are so different, so the requirements of managers are different”*. A representative from a membership organisation (MO1) further alluded to this *“diversity in the sector”* and noted, in relation to community-based and private provision, *“there’s owner/managers, there can be the registered provider that’s not always the manager [and] there’s community settings where there’s a board”*. Likewise, from a private management perspective, M8-P, acknowledged, *“it’s completely different then if you come in as a manager under community based, like it’s a completely different role to being a manager of a private setting”*.

As illustrated in the following sections of this chapter, these differing governance practices, and support structures across community-based and, private ECCE services influence all aspects of the manager’s role.

4.3.1 Community-based ECCE Service Governance

The findings point to consensus amongst managers, CCCs and MOs that a strong governance culture exists within community-based ECCE services, overseen by a Board of Management (BoM) or a Board of Directors. The most frequently used term is BoM and so that it is the term used in this study.

Reinforcing the fact that ECCE managers work within and across layers of the ecosystem (Bronfenbrenner 1979), CCC1 referred to the community ECCE manager as “*that kind of middle bit in terms of management*”, while MO2 noted that a BoM “*adds another layer*” of micro level management and governance to community-based services. Thus, community-based managers are at an advantage as they have “*ultimately less responsibility*” (CCC3) because they are “*accountable to boards*” (MO2). According to POBAL (2018b), the BoM ultimately ensures that a community service is both accountable and effective. Thus, the BoM require:

- Accountability for the entire organisation governed by them. The organisation must manage risk and be accountable to funders, members, and other stakeholders for both its financial affairs and activities
- Proper use of all money, property and resources. The organisation must manage and account for all resources as outlined and publish annual reports and financial statements.
- Compliance with all relevant legal and regulatory requirements.
- Effective employment practices ensuring that appropriate employment policies and procedures are in place for staff and volunteers, and that both are properly managed and supported

(Kildare County Childcare Committee (KCCC) 2019; POBAL 2018b, p.19-20)

Participating community-based managers mirrored these perspectives. M3-C for example, explained, “*I have a board of directors that I answer to*” while M4-C gets “[her] *appraisals from them*”. Both micro-level managers and meso-level CCC’s agreed that the governing structure of a BoM acts as a vital support for community-based ECCE managers. Accordingly, CCC2 acknowledged that in “*the community and voluntary sector, their board of directors’ acts as a support*”. Likewise, CCC3 stated that community-based managers have a “*very supportive board that they can go back to and say ‘look, I’m worried about this’*”. Echoing these statements at micro level, three

of the four participating community-based managers shared their perspectives on the support they receive from their BoM. As such, M1-C has “*a very strong [and] a very supportive board of directors*”. Similarly, M4-C benefits from her “*good board of management*” while M3-C stated that without the BoM she “*probably would have given it up to be honest, you know, if I was on my own*”.

In terms of the types of support provided, the findings suggest that the BoM provides much needed help with the considerable administrative burden associated with funding schemes, the Early Years Services Regulations 2016 and, the Early Years Education Focused Inspections (DES 2018a; Govt. of Ireland 2016). As noted by CCC3 “*there are some [managers] who have help with administration*”. Indeed, all four community-based managers repeatedly spoke of being “*blessed*” (M1-C) and “*lucky*” to have additional “*admin in the office with [them] who helps... [with the] paperwork and bureaucracy*” (M2-C). Equally, M3-C revealed that,

I've been quite lucky because I've had [admin assistant] ... she looks after the money side... taking in the money every week and all the accounts and the books... I had to upload all the schemes and put in all the different children into the schemes, so they [BoM] gave me time each week to do that.

This administrative support enables community managers to offload a significant amount of burdensome administration associated with policy compliance, as discussed in Chapter Two.

The manager’s role is located within the “administratively complex” (Walsh 2016, p.74) environment of DCYA funding schemes. As well as that, all managers are legislatively required to register their service prior to opening, re-register every 3 years and compile a lengthy list of policies and procedures, which requires them to have a well-established administrative process (Govt. of Ireland 2016; TUSLA 2018a). In this context, community-based managers enjoy a more advantageous position by comparison to their private counterparts who generally, cope with these demands on their own.

The findings suggest that private ECCE managers were acutely aware of the supports and protection provided by a BoM to community-based managers. For instance, M8-P echoes CCC3’s perspective, suggesting that because their governance structure involves a BoM, community-based managers “*have a lot more people around them*” and thus, they are “*at more of an advantage*”. She also recognised a significant difference in the financial protection afforded to community services through macro-level policies at State level, suggesting on “*the financial side of it, they’re far better off*”. Another

private manager, M5-P expressed similar frustrations at the perceived financial divide between community and private sector governance, which she clearly felt were unfair,

My big bone bearer with governance and government and that sort of thing is that the community services don't pay rates. We pay rates... [and] community services got a grant a couple of years ago to do up their garden [but] we weren't eligible.

As outlined in Chapter Two, private services incur costs that either do not exist, or are lower in community services, such as commercial rates and rent (Early Childhood Ireland 2016). In addition, community services in particular receive funding through multiple avenues such as private fundraising, sponsorship, parent fees and Government funding Schemes (KCCC 2020).

4.3.1 (a) Challenges Associated with Boards of Management

Notwithstanding the overall acknowledgement of strong governance and support offered to community-based services through their BoM, participants also identified certain challenges. For example, participants spoke of accountability responsibilities placed upon community-based managers because of the Charities Governance Code (2020). Therefore, while CCC3 believed that community-based managers have less responsibility, she indicated they are, in fact, *“in an even trickier position than private providers”* due to their additional legal responsibilities as *“they are expected to comply with the charities regulator code”*. Equally, CCC1 noted, *“any manager that's reporting to a board of management now has the charities regulator and the code of charities that they have to be aware of in order to implement”*. However, at micro level, M1-C was the only community-based manager to reference these legal responsibilities, stating, *“we have to report to the charities regulator [which has] tightened up on the governance side of it... everybody knows exactly where the land lies”*.

As discussed previously, the Charities Governance Code sets out minimum standards for an organisations' governing body (a manager/council/ director) in overseeing the achievement of specific objectives as set out in the Code. This includes the need to abide by all legal requirements and regulations, to be accountable and transparent regarding all matters of the service, and to have competent and capable people on the BoM (The Charities Regulator 2019). This ensures the organisation does *“the right thing the right way”*, through efficient, effective, accountable and transparent management and governance (The Governance Code 2020, p.8). Coupled with BoM oversight, this code of practice epitomises the strong culture of micro-level governance and management.

However, in addition to the perceived accountability pressures arising from the Governance Code, participants identified variation in BoM composition, rotating membership and diverse skill-sets as potentially challenging for community-based managers. Therefore, CCC2 suggested that the extent of support offered by a BoM varies from board to board. Consequently, management of a community-based service is “*very much dependent on the skillset of the volunteers that have given up their time to become directors of a company*” (Ibid.). CCC2 continued to elaborate on the malleable nature of community service management, illustrating a pattern of ever-changing BoM skillsets,

A childcare service can be running very smoothly with a particular set of directors, and naturally as people move on and directors resign and new directors are put in place, things can change very quickly.

Considering the skills necessary to sit on a BOM, MO1 felt that “*there would be benefit in boards in having to have some sort of skill set*”. She explained,

If you're on the board as a treasurer, you have to be good with money or you have to be an accountant, or a background in business. So, that would only enhance the role of managers

She, too, is acutely aware of the changing nature of BoM support. Mirroring CCC2's perspective, she maintained that “*if you have a board...and maybe it changes as the ECCE cycle changes every 2 years...you can have a great board and then a really absent board*”.

Similar viewpoints emerged at micro-setting level. Consequently, the three community-based managers who previously described their BoM as supportive, further identified the need for a “*really good skill base on the board*” (M4-C) and “*to have people on it that are knowledgeable in the area around childcare*” (M3-C). Commenting upon the board in her service, M1-C highlighted the range of skills held by her board members,

I have key people on the board who have key skills ...I have a financial lady, I have a lady who has a childcare background, I have 2 tutors in childcare ...I think it's absolutely essential to have a strong board with the key skills that are required.

M4-C, too, highlighted the skilled BoM, which she benefits from, stating, “*one of our board members is a business manager in the Bank of Ireland. So, you've got that expertise to guide you and keep you on track*”. The findings therefore indicate that a supportive BoM comprises of members with the key skills necessary to allow a manager to carry out his/her daily roles and responsibilities. Although this finding reinforces the notion that specific knowledge and skills are required to manage an ECCE service

effectively (Moloney and Pettersen, 2017), the fact is that in Ireland, managers are not mandated to hold a qualification requirement.

4.3.2 Private ECCE Service Governance

As indicated, the strong governance culture that exists within community services does not carry through to private services. This is because in general, private services depend solely upon a flat management structure, which tends to consist solely of the manager and, a deputy manager, as per the Early Years Services Regulations 2016 (Govt. of Ireland 2016). Consequently, CCC representatives and managers concurred on the solitary nature of micro governance in privately run services. Therefore, CCC3 noted that in private services, “*you often have the manager, and that person more often than not is the owner or the owner manager*”. In this scenario, Moloney and Pettersen (2017) indicate that the manager acts on their own and bears ultimate responsibility for accountability within their service. The findings of this study echo these viewpoints as private managers repeatedly highlighted the condensed structure of micro-setting management. M5-P stated, “*basically it’s myself and my business partner*”, and M9-P who “*co-manage[s] it together [with] the owner*”.

It is evident from the findings that private managers are aware of the importance of good governance in terms of accountability, addressing poor practice, offering support to staff and so on:

I understand [that] governance is necessary... because with things we’ve seen in the past with investigations that have gone on in crèches and preschools around the country that have come into the media...I’m totally happy with that. (M7-P)

Everybody needs to know who’s in charge... every business has to have it ...it’s very important...especially if I’m not on the premises, you know, who do the girls go to if there’s an issue...I don’t have problem with that. (M10-P)

However, CCC and MO representatives, again, expressed concern regarding the management of ECCE services. They were particularly concerned about accountability practices in private services, noting that they “*are only answerable to an owner...they are not answerable to a board of people*” (CCC3). Heffernan (2018) who undertook research on governance in Irish community ECCE services, states that the business structures taken on by private services (e.g., sole traders or limited companies), do not require a governing board. Therefore, each private service is responsible for managing its own accountability structures. Nonetheless, CCC1 highlighted the need for more formal accountability structures in private services,

We are in a situation where early years provision is primarily privatized...but they're being managed by individual companies, so there does need to be some sort of oversight on how they're being managed.

Similarly, MO1 stated, “*governance is a law in itself [and] those structures should be in place for good management*”. While CCC3 acknowledged the enormous responsibility that rests with the manager of the service, she felt, “*you can't just be left to your own devices, because the buck stops with you*”. Mirroring the lack of support for ECCE managers outlined in Chapter Two, CCC3 continued to state that, although private ECCE managers are vested in good governance, their lack of formal accountability structures leaves them with “*nowhere to go or no one to support you when you need support*”. Therefore, they have less support in managing accountability within their service, in comparison to BoM governed community-based services.

4.3.3 Sources of Management Support

In terms of management support, and building upon the findings relating to BoM support, the findings further indicate significant variations in support structures between private and community services. Again, both managers and CCC representatives spoke of the solitary nature of private service governance, as “*they [only] have a very good owner [therefore] for some managers, there is no one to talk to, there is nobody else*” (CCC3).

Congruent with meso-level perspectives, community-based managers noted that the absence of a BoM resulted in a lack of support for private ECCE managers. As such, M3-C sympathized with private service managers: “*I'd say they find it difficult... you couldn't do it on your own... with the support its fine, because you always have someone to talk to or to back you up*”. Similarly, M1-C stated, “*the difficulty is the supports on the ground for managers...there definitely needs to be more assistance around the governance and the policies and procedures and things like that*”.

Underscoring the support provided through her BoM, she noted, “*I'm in a unique position that I have a good strong board that can help me with that*”. Private Managers mirrored these difficulties. M8-P stated, “*in terms of support, like, we don't have any, there's no body there to help...you're totally isolated*”. Remarking that “*it's very unfair*”, M6-P wished to see increased State support, “*you're not given any extra resources, as such, to manage all this extra work... I think if they [macro-governance] gave us support like that to help with the governance of the place*”

The findings illustrate agreement among managers and CCC representatives that managers looked to support structures both outside and within their service for advice and support. As such, CCC2 indicated that some managers “*get support from external organisations where they would be members of IBEC or other business support companies [like] Peninsula*”, while CCC3 stated that “*there’s a huge colleague support network, so, they talk to each other [and] get support from each other*”. Corroborating CCC perspectives, M1-C surmised, “*it could be that a private provider gets support off other colleagues in the industry, and maybe that’s what they could do*”. Indeed, five private managers explained how they looked to other managers both within and outside their service for support

I have 2 service managers that I am very close to at the moment so if I ever have a question, I always just ring them and just make sure... their advice is invaluable (M5-P)

The owner is constantly in and out and is there for any questions or anything I’m unsure of... she’s there all the time for me (M9-P)

Furthermore, the remaining private manager, M10-P, subscribed to external organisations describing how she had “*backup between [X Company] and [X Company]*”. Following a disagreement with a TUSLA inspector where, upon repeated inspection, her policies and procedures “*still wasn’t good enough for her*”, M10-P identified the need for additional support to ensure the standard of the policies and procedures and, to eliminate any future disagreements. Consequently, she got “[X Company] *to do up all [her] new policies*”. She now feels that when she is “*showing TUSLA, they can’t complain...they can’t say anything because it’s all backed up*”.

However, external assistance is not confined solely to private ECCE managers with findings indicating that community-based managers also avail of such support. M1-C for instance, sought the help of an external business organisation in relation to her regulatory Human Resource (HR) responsibilities. She therefore “*called in the likes of [X Company] ...for the likes of HR issues*”. She continued, “*larger companies have HR support or HR advisors...but we didn’t have that... that’s where we need [X Company] to make sure that policies and procedures with regards to HR is airtight*”. It is critical that community-based managers do not take risks with administration and other management responsibilities, for as discussed earlier, they “*have to report to the charities regulator*” (Ibid.).

The findings indicate that, notwithstanding support provided by the BoM to community-based managers, that across community and private provision, managers appear to need external management support, particularly in the areas of HR

management (see section 4.4). Moreover, it is apparent that, in addition to the support available through commercial enterprise, the support and advice provided by the City and County Childcare Committee (CCC) is instrumental to enabling managers to enhance the quality of ECCE provision.

4.3.3 (a) The County Childcare Committee

A key source of support for managers appears to be the CCCs who are generally the first point of contact for ECCE managers and providers (POBAL 2019c). They provide local support to managers in administering State funded programmes and provide professional development and quality practice training and support (Early Childhood Ireland 2019a).

Significantly, the findings indicate that regardless of their status, whether community-based or private, all ECCE managers seek and avail of advice and assistance from their local CCC. MO2 surmised why this is so: *“while people think there is a difference between community and private, there isn’t as much as people think there is. Congruent with Moloney and Pettersen (2017) she noted, “the issues are the same for both community and private”*. The lack of support for managers, mentioned previously, also featured in CCC commentary. According to CCC1 *“there is a need for more formalized support...there’s not a huge amount of specific support given to the particular area around management”*. In terms of the availability of supports, CCC2 acknowledged, *“there aren’t that many beside ourselves [CCC]”*.

While each of the five participants working within the meso-level (CCCs and MOs) spoke in the context of their work with managers, overall, they agreed, *“on the ground, it’s usually the county childcare committees, they usually go to”* (MO2). Accordingly, CCC2 noted, *“we see ourselves as being one of the main supports to managers... we’re in contact daily with managers on various topics”* while CCC1 acknowledged that they *“are the port of call if the manager has an issue”*. These claims are borne out by the ten participating ECCE managers, all of whom repeatedly spoke of the supports received through their local CCC (see Table 7).

Table 7. Support Available to ECCE Managers

	Community-based ECCE Managers				Private Sector ECCE Managers					
Manager:	1 (M1-C)	2 (M2-C)	3 (M3-C)	4 (M4-C)	5 (M5-P)	6 (M6-P)	7 (M7-P)	8 (M8-P)	9 (M9-P)	10 (M10-P)
Type of Support	Board	Member-ship Organisation	Board	Board	Co-owner	Co-Owner	Co-Owner	Other Manag ers	Owner	
	External Support									External Support
	CCC	CCC	CCC	CCC	CCC	CCC	CCC	CCC	CCC	CCC

Interestingly, while M1 has the support of a “*very strong board*”, she stated that the “*CCC are always [her] first port of call...they’re at the other end of an email or the phone or whatever for advice*”. Similarly, M10-P “*ring[s] them all the time... I’d be lost without them*”. Throughout her 18 years of management, M6-P considered the CCC as

Somebody I’d be able to pick up the phone to... and I have done over the years...where I’m really out of my depth and I’m not sure where to go...they are on your side

Reflecting upon the challenge of when she “*just got landed*” into the management role, and was clearly out of her depth, M3-C described the CCCs as “*fantastic*” and her “*saving grace*”, stating, “*I didn’t know what I was after getting myself into... there was a lot of new things that I wasn’t prepared for*”. Elaborating on the manner of support provided by the CCC, she noted

The county childcare are fantastic...at the beginning, she [CCC representative] was coming up every single week going through stuff with me and helping me with stuff ...POBAL and all of that, so she did all of that with me... they were my saving grace

Likewise, M7-P described the CCC as her “*only port of call*”. She was particularly appreciative of their support about administering DCYA funding schemes. She therefore, “*call[s] on them for anything to do with the schemes*”, and when she is “*trying to sign contracts and be tax compliant and all that paperwork for POBAL*”.

The findings thus far, indicate that managers lack the knowledge and skills required to undertake many of the tasks associated with their role, such as human resource management and, compliance with Government schemes. Overall, the findings suggest that the significant diversity that exists between the governance and management of private and community-based ECCE services results in inconsistencies regarding the manager’s capacity to provide a quality service, as those from community services have stronger structures of accountability and support than those from private services. Thus, leading to diverse quality across the sector in Ireland (Moloney and Pettersen, 2017). Section 4.4 explores further the core responsibilities of the manager as alluded to by the CCC’s, MO’s and indeed, the managers themselves.

4.4 Core Management Responsibilities

As illustrated through the findings to this point and, through Chapter Two, the ECCE sector in Ireland has experienced unprecedented change since the establishment of the first ever Childcare (Preschool Regulations), 1996, resulting in a much expanded and complex management environment. The manager's roles and responsibilities are therefore increasingly complex. Overall, as discussed in Chapter Two, the Early Years Services Regulations 2016 and, the various DCYA funding schemes determine these roles and responsibilities. However, as the findings suggest, these responsibilities are not focused solely on ECCE policy and legislation, but include broader areas which are not directly related to ECCE (Moloney and Pettersen 2017) including for example, employment legislation, food safety and hygiene, fire safety, and building regulations (Ibid., TUSLA 2018a)

From an ecological perspective, ECCE managers work within and across multiple layers of influence, as they interact with the various stakeholders involved in the sector. At micro-level, managers are responsible for “*dealing with parents [and] taking on new families*” (M9-P) as well as “*dealing with children [and] dealing with staff*” (M5-P). Furthermore, at macro level, managers make sure that “*everything is in place for inspections*” (M1-C). The remainder of this section presents the findings relating to the manager's core responsibilities as identified by both micro-level (Manager's) and meso-level (CCC and MO) participants. These roles and responsibilities are identified as:

- Overarching Responsibility
- Quality Early Childhood Care and Education
- Human Resource Management
- Regulatory Compliance
- Financial Management and Accountability

4.4.1 Overarching Responsibility

The findings indicate consensus amongst all participants regarding the complexity of the manager's roles and responsibilities, which requires them to use "*different hats*" (MO1; M10-P). Acknowledging the vast array of management roles and responsibilities necessitated by the current policy and practice landscape, CCC2 considered that "*there are a huge breadth of responsibilities now with the managers in order to run a childcare service efficiently and sustainably*" with both CCC2 and, CCC3 agreeing that "*their responsibilities are huge, there's no two ways in talking about it*". CCC2 conveyed the enormity of the management role, suggesting they are overwhelmed by their roles and responsibilities, "*the managers role is many roles in one...it's that sense that 'I am responsible for...' and the list of things that they are responsible for are so overwhelming for many of them*. Likewise, in the opinion of MO1 "*managers in the early years... they have to be all things...it's a really complex role.*"

While these meso-level perspectives are reflected in the opinions of the participating managers, the findings suggest that managers working within private services are more overwhelmed by their responsibilities than community-based managers are. Of the five participating managers who acknowledged they were overwhelmed with responsibility, four work in private services, with one managing a community-based service. Accordingly, M4-C observed, "*there's a lot of responsibility [because] you're expected to be all things [and] it's gotten very stressful*". In her case, the support of the BoM is critical. "*I'm just lucky I've got a really good administrator, so I get great support in managing all that...not everywhere has got that*". By contrast, M6-P, who has 18 years' experience managing a private service, acknowledged the enormous expectations placed on her as a manager, which lead to her acquiring additional assistance in sharing the managerial responsibility in her service. She explained that while she "*ran the crèche for 15 years on [her] own*" she reached "*breaking point*". She continued to explain, "*the responsibility now is 'everything is on you'...you're so responsible to make sure everything is right. It's a lot on one person...I wouldn't be here unless I had somebody else with me*". Likewise, M5-P and M7-P were cognizant of the huge breadth of roles and responsibilities associated with managing their ECCE service, describing their role in terms of an "*umbrella*" being responsible for "*literally everything*" and being "*multi-faceted*"

It's so hard to pinpoint our roles and responsibilities because the umbrella is huge... you have to be everything... there's so much involved in managing a setting. (M7-P)

We are responsible for everything...literally everything from A to Z, there's something there to be done...it's very multi-faceted. (M5-P)

In common with Newstead and Isles-Buck (2019), the findings suggest that ECCE managers tend to take on too many responsibilities, leading to feelings of powerlessness and a sense of having to cope with everything. However, Moloney and Pettersen (2017) refer to the need for managers to delegate, which they identify as a core management skill. In the context of the present study, only two of the ten participating managers (i.e., M2-C and M7-P), spoke of delegating responsibility throughout their service. M7-P highlights the importance of delegation in relieving the stress and burden of the everyday management demands,

You need to be able to delegate jobs that somebody else can do. And it's not like offloading, its delegation in a good way, it frees you up to do something more, it takes the pressure off.

She explained that delegation requires the support of a co-operative staff team, “*it's important to look for support and delegate and be able to rely on your team for things they can help you out with*”. Drawing upon his experience as a childcare worker, prior to becoming a manager, M2-C wanted his staff to “*get what [he] didn't get [and] allow them to try different things*”. Again, highlighting the relationship between delegation and positive staff relations, he empowers his staff to have “*autonomy on the floor themselves*”. He stated, “*I have total trust in my staff team to deal with everyday bits and bobs that come up...the autonomy to them is like the delegation for me*”. Speaking from her experience of working directly with managers, CCC3 also identified delegation as a key element of effective management, “*I have met some truly excellent managers in my time...and often, they are the managers that are very good at sharing*”. Indeed Siraj-Blatchford and Manni (2007) suggest that involving staff in the management of an ECCE service significantly boosts staff morale.

4.4.2 Quality Early Childhood Care and Education Provision

While the findings clearly indicate that quality ECCE provision is a core management responsibility, they also identify variations in how macro and meso-level participants identified quality provision.

In common with Rodd (2013), CCC1 and CCC3 locate the vast array of management roles and responsibilities within two distinct but overlapping domains, management and leadership. CCC1 described the first domain as “*concrete management*” as it relates to the “*concrete... task[s] that needs to be done*” (CCC3). In terms of governing and

managing an ECCE service in line with policy and legislation, CCC1 referred to the manager's role as "*overall governance*" which she clearly associated with "*legislation...policy... inspection...finance [and] all that admin stuff*". Mirroring this perspective, CCC3 referred to "*business management [in terms of] administration, financial management, sustainability*".

The second domain: leadership, is described as "*a different kettle of fish*" (CCC1) and relates to the manager's responsibility to lead high quality ECCE provision through effective management of the curriculum. In the words of CCC1, managers are responsible for "*leading of quality [and] leadership of the curriculum*" as "*they have to lead their staff through quality development*". CCC3 mentioned "*pedagogical leadership*" which she described as "*leading education focused staffing... ensuring there is a shared vision and shared ethos and ensuring that there is a good curriculum framework in place*". According to CCC2, leadership at managerial level is imperative to quality ECCE provision. In her opinion, the manager – as a leader – influences how quality is communicated throughout the service, "*leadership in practice is very important for quality so that there is that quality focus from the top down to the staff*". She suggested that staff meetings are particularly conducive to creating quality educational experiences for children through staff reflection, "*scheduling staff and team meetings [is] very important for the staff [as they] have some reflection time and planning time... it is reflecting on practice and the emerging curriculum*".

While the CCCs clearly saw a role for managers in terms of curriculum management, the participating ECCE managers did not highlight this as a core responsibility. In fact, just one ECCE manager (M4-C) discussed the characteristics of a quality leader as described by the CCC representatives. She therefore stated that her main responsibility is to "*make sure that we are serving the children and families well... when they come to us, they have a happy fun time and a good education*". She described how she manages the curriculum through staff meetings and facilitating non-contact time for staff,

On Fridays, the children finish with us at 12 to allow us that non-contact time and reflect and have our staff meetings but also to talk about any programmes that we want to put in place for the children... so that the staff can really remove themselves and really think about what they are writing in their development records ...They can take their observations and really pin it down and then plan for play and activities following the child's emerging interests. (M4-C)

Chapter Two highlights curriculum oversight as a core management responsibility in the current policy landscape (DES 2018a; DCYA 2019a; NCCA 2009). It is associated with

the contractual arrangements of the ECCE scheme, which obliges managers to adhere to the principles of both Síolta and Aistear and, assessed by the DES. Therefore, as suggested by Fonsén (2013), Moyles (2006) and Kearns (2010), the management of curriculum planning, implementation and evaluation should be at the core of the ECCE manager's responsibilities as, it is also paramount to the provision of quality care and education (Moloney and Pettersen, 2017).

However, while only one manager referred to pedagogical leadership, the findings illustrate that six of the ten managers, including M4-C, provided high-quality ECCE through a happy, safe and caring environment. For example, in keeping with Regulation 19 of the Early Years Services Regulations 2016, M7-P highlighted her priority in promoting the Health, Welfare and Development of children,

Our main priority is the health and safety of the children...to make sure that the materials and environment is safe... to ensure that they are provided with high quality care and that the environment is inclusive.

She is also acutely aware of the need to work with families, noting, "*the next big thing I suppose is parents. You have to build a positive and open communicational relationship with them...to liaise and support them in ways as well* (M7-P). Similarly, M2-C highlighted an overlap between his role as an early years educator, focussed upon fun and enjoyment and ECCE service manager, focussed upon the welfare of the children.

As a manager – and then as a childcare worker – I'm here to work with the kids and I'm here to provide a great environment for them... and primarily our job is to be looking after the welfare and well-being of children and families.

Meanwhile, M8-P prioritised the care and happiness of the children over her administrative responsibilities under the Early Years Services Regulations 2016. Accordingly, when the inspector called "*in November*", M8-P explained that she would rather "*take a non-compliance for paperwork 110 % over my children being happy*". She concluded, "*I would prefer my children to be happier than just sitting there doing paperwork for the sake of it*". However, admirable her commentary sounds, it overlooks a basic principle of paper work which is associated with keeping children safe (TUSLA, 2018a) and good management practices which are linked to quality provision, sustainability, and, considered essential for continuity for children and parents alike (Moloney and Pettersen 2017).

4.4.3 Human Resource Management

Much research speaks of the inextricable relationship between quality management and quality ECCE provision (Moloney and Pettersen 2017; Moyles 2006; OECD 2012; Rodd 2013; Sylva et al. 2004; Sylva et al. 2010). In the present study, CCCs, MOs and managers acknowledge this relationship. CCC1 for instance, illustrated that *“the manager is really important for setting the culture [and] the expectations that you have of your staff”*, while MO1 associated *“good management”* with *“happy staff”* which, in turn, leads to *“happy children”*. More broadly, CCC2 suggested that ECCE managers should be aware of the importance of effective management and, an *“understanding...[of] why it’s [management] a good idea and why and how it could be beneficial, if used properly”*. She condemned the poor practices exposed in the RTE *Breach of Trust* (2013) and *Crèches Behind Closed Doors* (2019) documentaries. She criticised the inaction of the State to regulate ECCE services appropriately in relation to the actions seen within the documentaries, and believed that these investigations influenced the increased regulation in the sector, noting, *“awful and all as the primetime programmes were... in a roundabout way they expedited the introduction of measures”*. None the less, she suggested, *“what they exposed should not be allowed to happen and should have been regulated for”*.

Concerning quality ECCE provision, managers highlighted the critical importance of staff in developing and sustaining quality in their ECCE service. In fact, M1-C was the only manager to elaborate on the impact of effective management on quality provision. Congruent with MO1, she maintained that a *“strong manager leads to strong lead staff on the ground, and in turn leads to quality on the ground with the children”*. As mentioned however, other managers spoke of the positive relationships they had with their staff, explaining how these staff were integral to the development of quality within their service. For example, M8-P described her staff as *“great, they’re 110%... [but] for a service to work, you need happy staff [because] it’s such a tough job”*. Likewise, M2-C felt *“blessed with the staff I have here...having a good strong staff team sort of makes or breaks a centre”*. Establishing and maintaining a good staff team requires considerable management input (Moloney and Pettersen 2017). Consequently, managers referred to the core responsibilities of managing, supporting and training their staff.

In accordance with the provisions of the Early Years Services Regulations, 2016, ECCE managers must set out the procedures and systems of hiring employees including their job description and terms of employment along with a description of the interview process (TUSLA 2018*b*). In accordance with the services recruitment policy, a manager must ensure compliance with all employment and equality legislation during recruitment and selection processes, as well as ensuring the use of evidence based human resource practices (TUSLA 2018*a*). In this study, each of the CCC and MO representatives identified staff management and Human Resource Management (HR) as a core management responsibility. Referring to the “*significant*” responsibility of “*staff management as a HR element*”, CCC2 asserted that managers must look to the broader legislative context when carrying out their HR responsibilities, “*the manager is a HR manager as well...that comes hand in hand... keeping everybody, I suppose, happy while meeting all the employment law requirements*”. In addition, MO1 referred to the manager’s role in ensuring staff are appropriately trained and aware of ECCE policy and legislation. Therefore, “*while the manager might... be aware of the rules and regulations, it’s making sure that that information is disseminated throughout their setting amongst their team and staff and ancillary staff*”.

In keeping with these viewpoints, all ten managers mentioned HR management as one of their core responsibilities. M6-P explained how she; “*lead[s] a team of staff to make sure they are happy and content with the work, and that they are carrying out their roles... and everybody understands what is expected of them*”. Similarly, M8-P indicated that her “*main responsibility is that [her] staff are here, they’re good they’re happy*”. Alongside this, M6-P highlighted the pressure associated with staffing requirements, particularly in the context of the adult/child ratios required through the Early Years Services Regulations, 2016. She stated, “*if you’re short, you know, its constantly making sure your staff are here or you have enough staff*”.

In addition, two managers spoke of the need to ensure that staff are appropriately trained and “*are aware of the rules and regulations [so] everybody [is] on the same level*” (M7-P). In keeping with her responsibility under Regulation 9 – Management and Recruitment of the Early Years Services Regulations 2016, M3-C ensured her staff are competent to perform their roles by providing training on her services’ policies and procedures

We’re doing up our new policies and procedures, and we have to feed all that back to the girls... were going to have a workshop and do a PowerPoint on all the policies and procedures for the girls to break them down and go through them all with them,

Because, it's okay for me to know them and [administration assistant] to know them...but the girls have to know what's in them as well.

In addition to staff training, seven of the ten managers spoke of how they support their staff in a multitude of ways. For example, M4-C “*believe[s] in supporting the staff to become the best educators that they can be...I have an open door, the staff can come in and out as they want*”. She continued to elaborate on the respect and appreciation she affords her staff, thus, she “*believe[s] in creating that kind of environment that respects them as child educators and the profession that they've chosen*”. Likewise, M2-C respected the professionalism of the staff in his service and, saw himself as “*being an advocate on behalf of my service and my staff because I'm there to protect them*”. M10-P took a different approach, showing her appreciation for, and motivating her staff through “*treat days*”. Because she likes “*the staff to be happy...on a Friday...I go and I buy the brownies and cookies so they know I appreciate them. It really helps with morale in the place*”.

Ensuring high-quality ECCE is dependent on the quality and training of the personnel involved in the service (OECD 2006). The findings clearly indicate that HR management is a core aspect of the ECCE manager's responsibilities and requires significant time and effort. According to the OECD (2012) and Moloney and Pettersen (2017), the extent to which staff are managed and supported determines the quality of care and education provided to young children. However, research also suggests that high staff turnover undermines quality, impeding children's ability to form meaningful relationships with their caregivers (OECD 2012).

4.4.3 (a) Impact of Recruitment and Retention Crisis on HR Management

Staff recruitment, retention and turnover, which are intertwined with HR management, are significant issues in the ECCE sector in Ireland. Shockingly, 46% of full day care providers had staff vacancies in 2018, while 53% of services had difficulties in recruiting staff in the previous 12 months (POBAL 2019a). Worryingly, staff turnover in the sector stood at 46% in 2018/19 (Ibid.). Because of low pay and precarious contracts (SIPTU 2019b), ECCE staff are “*rejecting ECEC as a career choice [and are] voting with their feet*” (Moloney 2019b, online). The findings in the present study, also point to ongoing challenges with recruitment and retention, with six of the ten participating managers signifying difficulty in this area.

CCCs and MOs that support managers agreed that recruitment and retention is a considerable issue for managers. Because of “*the recruitment crisis*”, MO2 stated, “*finding anyone with a qualification is a difficulty for [managers] at this stage*”. Acknowledging the staffing issues within the sector, CCC1 highlighted the need for increased staffing support for managers. She suggested providing “*relief staff panels or an agency where you can get relief staff*”. MO1 argued that the employment procedures and systems as outlined in Regulation 9 – Management and Staffing (Govt. of Ireland 2016) and The Child and Family Agency Act (2013) place an undue burden on ECCE managers in a sector already hampered by a staffing crisis;

To expect managers to go through a recruitment process when there’s no staff out there is probably a bit much at the moment... [in terms of] having good references... references [are] verified...putting people through a detailed interview.

Worryingly, she indicated that managers compromise quality when filling staff vacancies in order to comply with staffing regulations. “*I feel people are nearly hiring a person retrospectively... we’re hearing from managers, ‘I’m hiring people that I wouldn’t even consider meeting because I have no other choice’*”.

These perspectives resonate with managers who experience considerable pressures and strains of the current recruitment and retention crisis. According to M9-P for instance, “*trying to find staff is impossible... I’m finding it so hard to find cover work... the staff aren’t out there to be got*”. In her opinion, it “*doesn’t seem to be getting any easier*”. It clearly affects her ability to provide a high-quality service as she feels comprised in her ability to comply with the Working Time Act 1997 (Govt. of Ireland, 1997) which sets out employee entitlements to annual leave,

[It] put[s] a huge emphasis on how a setting is run... it[‘s] very hard as well from a manager’s point of view because these girls are entitled to their holidays ... I would rather not put that extra pressure on the staff that are already here...but that can’t be avoided.

Managers concluded that the rules associated with DCYA funding schemes coupled with poor wages are major contributors to the staffing crisis, which clearly, hampers their ability to provide quality ECCE provision. M2-C stressed, “*we are losing staff so quickly... [because of] bad government policy...you have a sector that is so overwhelmed, and the morale is low*”. While recognising that the DCYA incentivise the recruitment of higher qualified staff through the ECCE scheme, M5-P equally acknowledged the lack of support provided to these staff in attaining professional working conditions and remuneration,

[It's] fantastic that they [DCYA] want you to have the higher qualified staff, but they don't support that, in so far as the ECCE scheme for example. We have two girls who both have levels 8's and they get paid for 3 hours. They do a lot more work than 3 hours... [and] how you could actually tolerate the pay scale is unbelievable.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the ECCE scheme provides funding for just 38 weeks of the year. Therefore, M5-P cannot afford to keep her staff due to a lack of State funding over the summer months, *“those girls are laid off for the summer...and every August you're praying that those girls come back to you. But there's nothing I can do in the meantime to keep them”*. In addition, M4-C was acutely aware of the lack of State support for staff salaries and appropriate working conditions, *“it's a disgrace...the government are not matching the true unit cost of the child, because they're estimating an early year's educator at €10 something an hour”*. Highlighting the difficulties in providing a quality service in the current staffing crisis, she suggested *“it's really hard to sustain that quality...I have lost so many highly qualified staff...[who] brought with them the quality that I want...and then off they go”*.

4.4.4 Regulatory Compliance

Unsurprisingly, the findings indicate that all fifteen participants identified policy and legislative compliance as a core management responsibility. Accordingly, CCC1 recognises that managers are required not just to comply with the Early Years Services Regulations 2016, but also broader legislation and policy, *“management involves the implementation of policies, reviewing policies, making sure they're up to date...they [also] have to be compliant with whatever regulations are out there”*. Echoing this point, MO1 elaborated on the broader legislation that is not directly related to ECCE, noting that *“by meeting regulatory compliance, it means you have to broaden your horizons into other areas like health and safety...[and] employment law”*. In addition, CCC2 asserted that managers must ensure they are *“meeting all the regulatory requirements”* from TUSLA, the DES, the DCYA and POBAL, and facilitate associated inspections,

From the early year's regulations, TUSLA inspections and the early years education inspections from the Department of Education... But also...the compliance with their funding and the funding that is administered by POBAL from the Department...So, it's quite extensive from the ECCE scheme to... the introduction of the National Childcare Scheme as well.

All ten managers equally highlighted their responsibilities to comply with policy and legislation across various Government organisations and State bodies. M1-C stated that her first responsibility is to comply with the Early Years Services Regulations 2016, and

to facilitate inspections by TUSLA. She therefore “*adhere[s] to all of those rules and regulations that we have like the childcare regulations... [and] all of those inspections, just making sure that the policies and procedures and everything is in place for inspections*”. Outlining the diversity of inspections she is required to facilitate, M7-P pointed to her “*responsibility to ensure all rules and regulations are adhered to and to communicate with the government bodies like TUSLA, the inspections and POBAL, the DES and the HSE for the kitchen*”.

Overall, the findings suggest that from micro-setting (managers) and, meso-level (CCC and Membership Organisation) perspectives, the administrative responsibilities associated with regulations, legislation and inspections significantly hampers the manager’s capacity to provide a quality ECCE service. Consistent with Moloney and Pettersen (2017) and Oke (2019), the findings indicate that, “*the focus [of management] has completely changed*” (M6-P) as “*managers [are] held up in an office all day*” (MO1) due to “*the amount of admin [that] seems to be mounting up*” (M2-C).

4.4.4 (a) Impact of Administrative Burden on ECCE Management

The issue of administration emerged across all fifteen interviews, with all participants agreeing that administration prevents managers from spending time with children and confines them to their office. Therefore, “*because of the huge admin burden, most of our managers are in the office a lot of the time*” (CCC1). As such, “*the child care side of it [management] is becoming a smaller and smaller part of their day to day work*” (CCC2). Consistent with Moloney and Pettersen (2017), MO2 suggested this is due to the increased administrative burden that accompanies the demands of policy and legislative compliance in the current Irish ECCE landscape, “*managers are spending less and less time with the children [because of] the amount of paperwork they have to do now, the administrative burden that’s there*”. Speaking to Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) conceptual framework, MO2 considered the influence of the chronosystem, i.e., change over time, on a manager’s expanding regulatory compliance responsibilities. Noting how the sector has become accountable to a multitude of governing bodies since 2008, she stated, “*you’re being inspected by other bodies...which they wouldn’t have had 12 years ago*”. Thus, affecting manager’s well-being as they “*are just so tired at the moment*” (MO1) and “*a lot exhausted*” (CCC3) because of having to be “*compliant with everything that’s required*” (CCC2).

Similarly, M6-P explained that the administration associated with the multitude of policy demands has dominated her management responsibilities, “*over the years it has become definitely more of an administrative role. So, its paperwork...it’s trying to keep on top of the admin*”. Consistent with MO2, M6-P also reflected on change over time, noting that over her 18 years of management, she has become progressively removed from caring for the children as the administrative demands of policy and legislation “*has gone a step too far*”. She stated how,

In the early says it [management] was definitely more hands on, it didn’t have the same rules and regulations and I personally felt I was a lot more hands on with the kids. Whereas now, not that I’m detached from it... I find that I hardly see the kids at all...you are constantly thinking about the paperwork or the policy...and not necessarily the kids anymore.

Also reflecting upon his 12-year tenure as manager, M2-C felt he has been gradually pulled away from working directly with children and staff, and pushed into administration due to the growing policy and legislative demands,

When I started as a manager 12 years ago, the admin and the bureaucracy was minimal compared to what it is now... back then I was able to do both... the good old days [of] being able to do a little bit of admin and then be able to come out on the floor with the girls...and this is the thing that breaks my heart, that element is gone for me. Because I just don’t have the time to do it.

The findings further indicate that eight of the 10 managers now spend most of their time carrying out their administrative responsibilities in the “*office*”. Thus, they “*spend days on end in the office dealing with paperwork*” (M9-P) and are “*more in the office than anything else...[because] all [they] do is paperwork*” (M10-P). Moreover, M1-C says, “*without a doubt...the biggest impact has been and is the paperwork*”. In this respect, she is “*like every other manager in the country ...in the last 6 to 8 months I have not stepped outside the office*”. Epitomising the impact of the administrative burden on her role, M1-C articulates how her lack of availability “*obviously leads to difficulty on the ground because staff don’t see me visible in rooms, that’s not a good thing*”.

As detailed in Chapter Two, successive POBAL Reports (2016; 2018a) indicate a slight decrease in the numbers of managers working directly with children, and a progressive increase in managers engaged solely in administration between 2015/2016 to 2017/2018. This increase coincides with major policy and legislative changes within the sector including the expansion of the ECCE Scheme in 2016 and, the Early Years Services Regulations 2016, both of which, participants identified as administratively burdensome. In the context of this study therefore, it seems that managers are being consumed by paperwork and administration required by policy and legislation, to the detriment of being available to staff and children. The OECD (2019b) reports that the

support offered to ECCE staff by managers is key, as staff who recounted that they received little support from managers, also expressed lower job satisfaction and performed their teaching and care-giving tasks less well than those who receive greater support (Ibid.). Thus, signifying an incompatible relationship between the current expectations placed on Ireland's ECCE managers from macro-government level, and the development of a quality ECCE provision.

4.4.5 Financial Management and Accountability

POBAL describe financial management as “the use of financial information, skills, and methods to make the best use of an organisation's resources” (2011, p. 14). Outlining the importance of financial management for the survival of a service, MO2 suggested that a core responsibility of the manager is to *“make sure they are sustainable. If not, they won't be able to continue with their business”*. As mentioned, financial sustainability has emerged as a significant issue in Ireland's ECCE services, as the State dramatically underspends on ECCE provision, leading to challenges in relation to staff wages and service viability. Regardless of the fact that ECCE staff are among the lowest paid professionals in Ireland, paid on average €12.55 per hour (POBAL 2019a), between 60% and 80% of a service's operational costs are taken up by staff wages (Early Childhood Ireland 2016). Therefore, as acknowledged by CCC2, *“financial management is very important now because of the strains of financial sustainability within the sector and...continuing low level of investment”*.

Regardless of whether funding is sufficient, participants spoke at length about the manager's duty to be accountable for State funding. CCC1 acknowledged the need for good governance and accountability due to *“the huge amount of funding coming into services that has to be accounted for”*. Likewise, MO1 acknowledged the extent of funding provided to the sector and expressed a positive attitude to the focus upon governance and management requirements in the Early Years Services Regulations 2016. Thus, the regulatory requirements are *“good...because services are getting State money”*. Likewise, MO2 believed the reason for the increased focus upon governance and management in the Early Years Services Regulations 2016, is because of the increase in sectoral funding, as managers now *“have to stand over how [they] spent [State funds]”*

At the end of the day, the difference between 2006 and 2016 and the focus on governance is about public money and exchequer funds. There's a lot of schemes being funded. There's 2 free preschool years, the ECCE years...once public money is

involved, there's always going to be a focus on it and a need for transparency and governance. (MO2)

From a micro-setting perspective, six managers spoke of their responsibility to tend to the “*POBAL aspect of things* (M1-C). In accordance with POBAL compliance, M4-C has a responsibility to ensure “*good accountability [and to] make sure the funding goes towards what it's meant to be going towards*”. While M7-P specifically outlined POBAL's requirements in terms of financial accountability,

Your folder has to be matching exactly with what you're doing ... if there's parents paying additional fees they have to be documented. You have to show them [POBAL] where the fees are coming from – if they're coming in through direct debits. You have to outline and have all that ready for them in the folder.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the DCYA delegate responsibility to POBAL for the administration of ECCE funding programmes such as the NCS and the ECCE Scheme. POBAL undertake compliance visits to inspect a services attendance levels in accordance with online registrations and use of State funds to ensure accountability and transparency (DCCC 2018, Walsh 2016). *Section 4.5* further discusses details of POBAL inspections. It is apparent however, that the policy and legislative demands, as set down by macro-level ECCE, has a significant impact on micro-level management of finances and sustainability of services.

4.4.5 (a) Relationship between Policy Demands and Financial Sustainability

Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (Govt. of Ireland 2013) and, Part 2 of the Early Years Services Regulations 2016 (Govt. of Ireland 2016) requires all ECCE settings to apply for inclusion on the National Register of Early Years Services, established and maintain by TUSLA. Managers must therefore submit an application for registration to TUSLA and provide a lengthy list of information and documentation (see appendix 5), including evidence of planning permission and a copy of fire safety certification. In keeping with regulatory requirements, managers must apply for re-registration every three years, meaning that many services applied for re-registration in mid to late 2019. Findings indicate that the costs associated with legislative compliance affects financial stability. Drawing upon her interactions with ECCE managers, MO2 suggested they were ill-informed of the financial and administrative implications of re-registration

They thought it would be like what happened in 2016 which just was a statutory declaration that you just signed...managers knew they had to re-register, but they didn't anticipate the amount of paperwork or the cost maybe if they needed fire and planning work done.

From a management perspective, M2-C argued that re-registration requirements in particular jeopardised the financial sustainability of many services across Ireland, “*the fire regulations and planning permission; that was detrimental to a lot of services... [it was] too costly and put too much stress on the sector*”. M5-P spoke of the significant financial stress placed upon her because of legislative compliance. Noting that, while the service was “*lucky that with our planning permission everything was passed*”, she indicated the registration was a different matter,

But when it comes down to the fire regulations because we had no fire certificate, we had to have that done and that cost us money...But who's going to pay him? We're hand to mouth literally.

In addition to registration requirements, M5-P further discussed the difficult position she experienced following the withdrawal of Ironshore Europe from the Irish ECCE insurance market, resulting in some insurance premiums doubling (Clarke and McCárthaigh 2019). In her case, “*€4000 worth of money [went] into insurance... [as her] insurance went up by 90%*”. On top of that, in keeping with Revenue requirements, she revealed how as a private ECCE manager, having recently paid “*our corporation tax...we were down almost €3000*”. She expressed anxiety at not being able to pay her staff wage bill because of the financial issues she has encountered, “*now I can't meet my wages next week... we [have] no money to do anything with...its very worrying at times*”.

While it is apparent that the ECCE Scheme significantly affects the manager's responsibilities in terms of administration and staff management, findings indicate it also affects financial sustainability. M7-P explained this, describing how she runs a full-time service, which opens for 52 weeks of the year. However, because the DCYA fund the ECCE scheme for 38 weeks only, she experiences a considerable gap in funding for the remaining 14 weeks. Highlighting the supports she would like to be available to managers, she asserted that,

We'd like if the ECCE scheme wasn't only 38 weeks so we could actually manage a 52-week year rather than trying to balance your financial status out over July and August. We have to plan for the 52 weeks of the year... that has a huge impact on how we run our setting as well because your making sure you can carry yourself through July and August...because the doors have to be open come September.

Section 4.5 discusses financial sustainability and viability in detail, outlining the core knowledge and skills required by ECCE managers.

4.5 Core Management Knowledge and Skills

There is no doubt that managers undertake multiple responsibilities. These responsibilities are dependent upon a well-prepared ECCE manager, knowledgeable in areas relating to ECCE policy and legislation, employment legislation, administration, human resource management, physical resource management, financial accountability, curriculum oversight, collaboration with parents, decision-making, performance management, change management and the general ability to operate a business (Moloney and Pettersen 2017). Given the extent of knowledge required by managers, Jameson and Watson (1998) suggest that finding managers who are knowledgeable and prepared in all aspects of ECCE management is a difficult task, describing them as a “rare gem” (p.87). Resonating with this viewpoint, CCC2 and CCC3 acknowledged the complexity of the skillset required by an ECCE manager. CCC2 articulated that “*it’s hard to get the balance at being good at all those aspects and skills for all those areas... it’s hard to get it all in one person*”, while CCC3 concurred, stating that “*getting people who have a broad skill set, they are very rare and it’s a huge amount to ask*”.

As discussed previously, ECCE managers work within and across various levels of an ecological framework; the ECCE service at micro-level, support systems and individual inspectors within the mesosystem, and legislators and policy developers within the macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner 1979; Moloney and Pettersen 2017). However, this study also examines how the chronosystem (change over time) affects the manager’s role.

4.5.1 Change Management and the Chronosystem

Given the progressively complex and expansive management role that has emerged since 1996, the sector is characterised as “*ever changing*” (CCC2) where “*the ground rules change the whole time*” (M5-P). Sectoral change is inevitable (Rodd 1998). Consequently, the ability to initiate and lead change is a critical management skill (Andrews 2009, Kearns 2010; Moloney and Pettersen 2017; Newstead and Isles-Buck 2019).

In this study, findings suggest that the amount of time spent in management has a direct impact on the level of change experienced by managers and, consequently, the level of change they must implement and oversee within an ECCE service. MO2 referred to the constant changes in the sector relating to both funding and regulatory requirements. In

particular, she referenced the National Childcare Scheme and the requirement for services to re-register in keeping with the Child and Family Agency Act, 2014. She noted, *“there’s changes all the time – last year it was the NCS... On top of that they had the re-registration”*. Equally, M3 who had 3 years’ management experience, notes, *“every year there seems to be more and more and more and more that you have to do”*.

According to the findings, newer managers coming into the sector do not have the same wealth of experience in managing change as those who have been managers over a longer period. Newer managers are considered less prepared for their management responsibilities because of their limited experience of micro-level change management. In response to a question regarding the expansion of managerial roles under the Early Years Services Regulations 2016, M2-C with 12 years management experience, stated he *“didn’t have much of a problem with them”* because he’s *“been in it for donkeys’ years”*. However, he noted, *“for some services, smaller services or younger managers, it was a big shift”*. Rationalising the challenge for newer managers, CCC1 felt they

May not have developed that history bit when you go into a service and seen, you know, ‘that’s the way we’ve always done it’... But they may also not have a concrete understanding of the regulations and what they mean on the ground.

Indicative of the considerable change resulting from the introduction of the Early Years Services Regulations 2016, the ECCE Scheme in 2010 and many other policy demands (see Chapter Two), CCC1 suggested that longer-term managers *“have experienced change management within the sector, so they may be more prepared than somebody coming into it”*. Nonetheless, M8-P who became a manager in 2017 challenged this perspective. In her opinion, she *“would have always had the 2016 ones [regulations]”*. She believed this is, in fact, an advantage as she was *“only seeing things from now [therefore] the changes to me – there are no changes because it’s the only ones I’ve been used to”*. Indeed, CCC2 stated, *“the expectation is clear on what is required”* as newer managers are *“not trying to adjust from one system to another”*. Concurring, MO2 noted, *“new settings opening are used to them [the Early Years Services Regulations 2016] because that is what they have to do to open”*.

Speaking from an Australian context, Jones and Pound (2008) suggest, *“the management of change set against pressing timescales can be overwhelming for setting managers and staff”* (p.23). Participants in this study (managers, CCC and MO representatives) all of whom are critical of the rapidly changing policy landscape, also

acknowledge this difficulty. Drawing upon her experience of speaking with managers on the ground, MO2 referred to the vast change in the sector over time and its associated difficulties.

The volume of change that has been in the sector for the last couple of years has been very difficult for people on the ground...they're not getting time to bed down some of the changes that they've had to make.

M6-P, whose management experience spans 18 years, articulated these difficulties and her frustration towards the pace of change within the ECCE sector, indicating the sector is in a constant state of flux

They [Government Departments] just keep changing it and adding to it, you don't even have time to think because it's moving on to the next thing before you've even dealt with the last thing that they've thrown at you.

This constant state of flux is reiterated by M7-P, a manager of 6 years, who stated, “things change so frequently, you know, between all schemes and policies being introduced”. She was especially critical of how the DCYA introduce these various schemes and policies, suggesting that changes are “thrown at you”, in her commentary, M6-P uses similar language to denounce the actions of the DCYA whom she claims, “fire these changes at you”. Adding to her frustration is her perception that the Department do not prepare managers for the changes, noting there is “no heads up and they're saying, ‘do this’ and it has to be done by a certain day and you're stressing and trying to get all this done”. This sentiment is not confined to participating managers. Indeed, CCC1 further suggested, “every week, there's going to be something new...every day there's a policy development”.

The ECCE sector in Ireland has experienced unprecedented change in a relatively short period associated with multiple policy initiatives between 1996 and 2020. Section 4.5.2 discusses the core knowledge and skills required to manage an ECCE service effectively. In the context of the present study, all participants considered knowledge of ECCE policy and practice as imperative for an ECCE manager.

4.5.2 ECCE Practice and Policy

All fifteen participants (managers, CCC's and MO representatives) agreed that managers must be knowledgeable in the area of ECCE practice, including “dealing with parents and different situations that arise in relation to kids...illnesses or developmental issues” (M9-P). Similarly, CCC1 conveyed how “in an ideal world...they'd have knowledge of child development... [and] how children learn”. MO2 also stated that managers “have to have the knowledge of early years development [and] be able to

follow a curriculum”. At micro-setting level, managers also shared these viewpoints. In fact, seven of the ten participating managers stressed the need for knowledge of ‘childcare’ and experience in ECCE. According to M4-C “*you would have to have an early year’s background with child development, that is essential. I don’t think I could do my job without it*”. Likewise, M2-C felt that seeing the service through the lens of a childcare worker “*gives [the manager] that empathy*” and perspective,

Before becoming a manager, people need a good few years’ experience working literally from the ground up, and knowing all the jobs have to be done and knowing how they are meant to be done but also knowing how it feels to do those jobs.

In addition to knowledge of ECCE practice, participants suggested that managers need an extensive knowledge of ECCE policy and legislation. Findings indicate that manager knowledge requirements have changed over time. In the opinion of CCC1, “*the knowledge requirement has shifted a little bit...the knowledge that they need to have that kind of helps the... service to stay open... [and] stay compliant, is around policy*”. She referred to the various aspects of policy and legislation that requires specific knowledge, such as DCYA funding schemes (e.g. ECCE Scheme/NCS), the online platform used to track children’s attendance (e.g. PIP/Early Years Hive), as well as the associated inspections by multiple State bodies:

There’s knowledge around the funding schemes, there’s knowledge around the IT systems that come with the funding schemes... there’s knowledge around the preschool regs, the preschool inspections [and] the quality framework that the DES inspectors use (CCC1).

Equally, MO1 and M10-P suggested that firstly, managers should have “*knowledge of the regulations*”. They also need knowledge around the expectations required by “*POBAL and TUSLA and your inspections*” (M3-C) and to “*know what’s expected of you when they [State inspectors] come*” (M7-P).

However, the findings point to a gap in managers’ awareness of the essential management knowledge and skills. Indeed, participating managers provided little insight into other areas identified as central to the effective management of an ECCE service, such as HR management, financial management or business management (Moloney and Pettersen 2017). M9-P’s response is particularly concerning in this regard, as she signified a lack of awareness of either the Early Years Services Regulations 2016 or the preceding Childcare (Preschool Services) Regulations 2006. Therefore, although M9-P “*took over the role as a manager in 2014*” during which time the Childcare (Preschool Services) Regulations 2006 were enforced, she admitted “*I wasn’t aware of the old regulations*”. Furthermore, when asked about the governance

and management requirements under the Early Years Services Regulations 2016, she asked; “*what exactly is it that you’re asking?*”

4.5.3 Lack of Awareness of Core Knowledge and Skills

Interestingly, none of the ten participating managers provided any insights into core knowledge and skills. Yet, from the perspective of those offering support at meso-level, CCC and MO representatives, financial and human resource management is essential.

4.5.3 (a) Financial Management

Chapter Two identifies effective financial management as a core management responsibility (Moyles 2006; Moloney and Pettersen 2017; POBAL 2011). Managers must comply with financial accountability requirements, as determined by policy directives, as well as the maintenance of a sustainable and viable ECCE service that “avoid[s] failure” (POBAL 2011, p.14). As suggested by Moyles (2006), effective financial management requires an aptitude for the area of finance and an understanding of effective budgeting, financial planning and transparent accounting, upon which, quality ECCE is dependent (Moloney and Pettersen 2017).

Accordingly, three of the five CCC and MO participants recognised the vital knowledge base and skillset of financial management. CCC2 stated “*it’s a given*” that managers will be competent in areas of financial management. Further illustrating the impact of the chronosystem on the manager’s role, CCC2 explained how current requirements differ significantly to policy requirements 10-20 years ago, which did not require specific financial knowledge. In her opinion, “*there’s a lot to do with... finance and financial management alongside what we would have traditionally expected as one of the main skills that a manager would have to have*”. Furthermore, MO2 highlighted the complex skillset required to manage finances effectively, stating, managers are “*like an accountant and a mathematician*”.

However, just two managers mentioned the need for knowledge of financial management practices and procedures, with a difference in emphasis across both, one of which managers a community setting, and the other a private setting. Therefore, while M1-C commented briefly on the need for “*knowledge around [the] financial*” side of running an ECCE service, M10-P outlined more specific elements like budgeting and banking, stating “*you have to have certain knowledge of how the money works, how the*

banking system works, how to... budget". However, an understanding of and ability to apply financial management practices and procedures is essential for sustainability, and by extension to quality ECCE (Moloney and Pettersen, 2017). This includes knowledge around financial reporting, accounts, record keeping, financial controls, planning and budgeting (Ibid., Sayer 2007).

4.5.3 (b) Human Resource Management

Many researchers indicate that HR management is an essential professional ECCE management skill (Kearns 2010; Langston and Smith 2003; Moloney and Pettersen 2017; Moyles 2006; Preston 2013). It is also clear that establishing good HR practices require significant time and effort. Moyles (2006) as well as Moloney and Pettersen (2017) identify a range of skills required by managers to ensure effective human resource management, including, the need to be effective in recruitment and appraisal of staff, to maintain appropriate authority, to foster good relations with and between staff and parents, and to praise good practice and moderate poor practice. Indeed, the Early Years Services Regulations 2016 mandate all the skills outlined.

As discussed in Chapter Two, managers must abide by evidence-based human resource practices during staff recruitment and selection processes and ensure effective management of complaints from staff or parents (Govt. of Ireland 2016; TUSLA 2018a). At meso-level, CCC and Membership Organisation representatives acknowledged the critical importance of knowledge around HR management. MO1 elaborated on the need for HR knowledge, noting that managers "*have to have the HR side of it and staff interviews [or] knowing how to run a complaint from the parent's side*". However, from her experience, managers are not well versed in the area of HR, "*even the taking up of and validation of references, some managers don't even know what that is or what questions to ask.*" Similarly, CCC3 spoke of the difficulties faced by managers in relation to HR management. She conveyed the expectations placed on them to be knowledgeable in area that has a "*huge legislative backing*" with no core training, while also acknowledging the high risks associated with poor HR practice,

It is expected that managers are to know how to manage HR...we get a lot of calls regarding HR queries. It's an entire area of expertise... [with] a huge legislative backing in terms of the consequences for a company if they get HR issues wrong.

While confirming that managers generally, are well versed in areas relating to ECCE practice, she also identified a gap in the skillsets required to adequately manage staff, "*typically, they have a good understanding of early childhood and children's*

needs...[but] there's not the skills around how to adequately supervise staff [or] what staff supervision looks like". While MO2 epitomised managers lack of self-awareness of HR knowledge, stating that "a lot of managers don't know that they are doing it...HR only ever becomes an issue when you have an issue."

Notwithstanding the burden of responsibility placed on managers in terms of HR management, none of the ten participating managers identified this as an area requiring specific knowledge or skills. In fact, two private managers, M7-P and M10-P justified why HR knowledge is not necessary for the management of an ECCE service. In the case of M7-P, HR knowledge is not required because of the size of her service. She surmised that, *"the service is too small, I think, to need HR. It's not as if it's massive so it's not necessary"*. Equally, M10-P used the size of her service, as well as the good relationship she has with her staff to justify why knowledge of HR management is not required. In her case, *"we're only a small place... we all get along. So, sitting there trying to do an appraisal with somebody is a bit awkward. It's not a huge big company"*. Notwithstanding her awareness of the significant risks related to poor HR management, *"it's so easily get sued nowadays for unfair dismissals and blah blah blah"*, M10-P felt she does not need knowledge of HR because she is able to draw from the expertise of external support organisations, which she subscribes to. She noted, *"I have a company called [X] that I pay every month...because I wouldn't know it all off by heart... you don't have a HR degree"*. Providing an example of the critical HR support she receives from this external company, M10-P concluded,

I had a girl that just abruptly left...But when I was talking to [X Company], they were like 'oh that's called an impulsive resignation'. So legally I have to send her a letter to give her 5 days to change her mind. But I would never have known that if I didn't have [X Company].

Furthermore, while M9-P was mindful of the importance of staff management, *"if you can't manage your staff correctly well then, you're not going to be doing your job properly"*, she simply stated that *"common knowledge"* is sufficient to manage her staff and her ECCE service appropriately.

Given that both financial management and HR management are vital skills required to effectively manage an ECCE service (Kearns 2010; Langston and Smith 2003; Moloney and Pettersen 2017; Moyles 2006), and by extension, provide quality ECCE, evidence suggests that a number of participating managers may require additional support in recognising their responsibilities regarding both skillsets. Thus, in the context of this study, findings indicate a disconnect between management and quality provision.

4.5.4 Potential Management Qualification/Training

As discussed repeatedly throughout this study, there is currently no training or qualification requirement for ECCE managers to “own, [or] manage” an ECCE service in Ireland (Fine-Davis 2007, p.17). With this in mind, research participants were asked about their attitude toward potential management qualifications. As indicated in section 4.5.4 (a), 12 research participants (seven managers and all five CCC and, MO representatives) were positively disposed toward a management qualification. However, concerns emerged in relation to introducing any qualification requirement in the current policy and practice landscape.

4.5.4 (a) Attitudes towards Management Training

From a meso-level perspective, CCC’s and MO’s felt that management training would significantly benefit the sector in terms of increasing quality by “*assist[ing] in the delivery of a more stable sector*” (CCC2). Similarly, CCC3 indicated that it would result in managers having shared knowledge and experiences; “*having everyone qualified to a certain level with the core content being the same...it would be much easier because [managers] both speak the same language*”. From the perspective of membership organisations, MO2 claimed that if managers had the required knowledge and skills, it would “*relieve the panic felt about all the administration that has to be done...if they had the skills to deal with it...that it would be easier*”. However, while MO1 felt that a management qualification is necessary, she was skeptical of introducing such a qualification too quickly, fearing that managers would resist it because of the stress they are under currently

There needs to be recognition that there needs to be a step taken before you take on the role to give you the skillset to manage... it’s a bigger leap than people realize...[but] there would be great resistance to it because managers are just so tired at the moment.

While CCC1 would like to see an increased policy focus on the management role in the form of “*management training specific to the current context in Ireland*” and the need to “*identify[] the fact that the role of a manager is so diverse and it’s changing all the time*”, she stated that “*in terms of benefitting the sector, it will depend on what context a mandatory qualification for a manager comes in*”. Therefore, she “*would be hesitant to recommend anything else than an early years degree*”. She articulated how “*if given a choice...for a manager as a mandatory [qualification] requirement or a room leader*” she would opt for the “*room leader*”. She expanded her perspective by stating that she

would like to see both the room leader and the manager holding a qualification, because *“you don’t want to tip the dynamic that the manager is less qualified than the room leader”*.

From a manager’s perspective, seven of the ten participating managers saw the need for management training, and discussed it in terms of providing managers with better knowledge and understanding of management and quality provision. Thus, M1-C believed, it *“increases understanding around quality provision”*. M3-C, who would like to see *“down the road maybe... some sort of course for a manager”*, suggested that it would give managers *“a better understanding and a better idea of what you’re doing in the running”*. While M8-P agreed, noting that management training *“would be a life saver”*, she held conflicting opinions regarding the practicalities of mandatory training in the current political landscape. She therefore cited issues such as the availability of time, *“but to be able to go and do it then I don’t know how practical it is either... trying to find the time and the resources to do it is the problem”*. Similarly, while M4-C illustrated a positive attitude to qualification attainment, she acknowledged the impact it would have on managers in a sector where downward governmental pressures are constant, *“any training is useful, you’re going to learn from it. As long as it doesn’t come – as it usually does with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs – with another heavy burden”*. Moreover, M5-P stated, *“we need funding for it”*.

The limited use of management training in the current ever-changing policy landscape in Ireland, features in M7-P’s attitude towards potential training,

I genuinely don’t think there’s a place in the sector for a manager’s qualification because things change so frequently, you know, between all schemes and policies being introduced. I don’t think a particular course would be able to cover it.

M5-P however challenged this perspective, suggesting that a qualification would enable an ECCE manager to cope with the consistent change that is characteristic of the sector, *“people would find life easier the work wouldn’t be as demanding when something new comes along”*.

It is clear that, for a small number of managers in this study, experience is more important than a qualification. M10-P, who holds a QQI Level 5 qualification, felt that her 15 years management-experience has provided her with sufficient knowledge and skills to manage her ECCE service effectively. Claiming that she has as much knowledge as a Level 8 qualified manager, she indicated also that she has remained up to date with changes in policy and legislation throughout the years,

Well, I don't think that comes into it [management qualification] ... I actually only have a level 5...but I have a lot of knowledge. I know as much as somebody in level 8. Because I keep up to date with all the legislation and everything that's going... I'm not really going to learn any more that I already know

She continued to illustrate how undertaking such a qualification would be difficult given the administrative duties that encompasses the management role. Like others, she too, cited time as a significant issue, *“it just depends on, would it be a full time, would it be part time, would it just be a couple of Saturdays or from home...[because] the paperwork side of it takes up so much of your time and it eats into your own personal time”*. Similarly, M9-P emphasised experience of ECCE as more useful in preparing managers for their role, rather than qualifications alone, *“yes, I do feel like qualifications are hugely important, but I think experience is just as important”*. She too indicated how the downward pressures associated with State demands impedes the development of a mandatory ECCE management qualification, *“it's bringing in extra pressure which seems to be a constant happening”*.

Unfortunately, no statistics are available to illustrate the current qualification levels of those holding management positions in ECCE services across Ireland. Therefore, it is not possible to conclude that managers are, in fact, less qualified than their counterparts who work directly with children. What is known, is that of the 23,190 staff that work directly with children, 12% are in management positions (POBAL, 2019a). Thus, indicating that these managers hold at least a minimum QQI Level 5 in ECCE as required by the Early Years Services Regulations 2016. In addition, of the 3,359 ancillary staff, 20% are in management positions. However, because they do not work directly with children, these ancillary staff in management positions are not legislatively required to hold a qualification relevant to ECCE, further masking current qualification levels of managers in the sector.

None the less, participants who regarded management training as positive, also associated this training with the development of quality management practices such as leadership skills, HR skills, the constitution of quality provision, and the running of an ECCE service.

4.5.4 (b) Structure of Management Training

As previous findings dictate, participating managers felt that knowledge of ECCE practice and policy was most essential to the management of their service. In keeping with this finding, four managers suggested that a qualification in ECCE is suitable to

prepare managers for their role, while four managers suggested that potential management qualifications should form part of core ECCE training, and one highlighted the need for post-graduate qualifications in ECCE management. Figure 8 provides an overview of the suggested management qualifications required.

Table 8. Suggested Management Qualification

	Community-based ECCE managers				Private Sector ECCE managers					
Manager:	1 (M1-C)	2 (M2-C)	3 (M3-C)	4 (M4- C)	5 (M5-P)	6 (M6-P)	7 (M7-P)	8 (M8-P)	9 (M9-P)	10 (M10-P)
Type of Qualification	ECCE Degree + CPD	ECCE Degree + Level 9 in Mngt.	ECCE Mngt. Course ↓ Maybe Level 8 ECCE	ECCE Degree	ECCE Degree + Business/ Mngt. Course	ECCE + Business/ Mngt. Course	None ↓ Current Requirement is enough	Maybe ECCE or Leadership Course	None ↓ ECCE Experience	None ↓ ECCE Experience

When discussing the possible components of management training, managers provided insight into what they considered essential knowledge and skills as well as gaps in current knowledge and skills. M3-C expressed a desire to learn a range of knowledge and skills related to managing and governing an ECCE service, including “*something around your roles and responsibilities, and about your management and governance, and about managing day to day running, [and] staff*”. M8-P is focussed upon learning specific knowledge and skills regarding leadership, which would enable her to “*treat the staff a little bit better...if I was trained more in... bringing them in doing appraisals, a leadership kind of thing. That I’d say would benefit me a little bit more because I don’t have that*”.

The need for training in business management featured in the commentary of all three CCC representatives, with CCC3 asserting that management training should have “*more [of] a pedagogical leadership focus, that also tied in key skills like management of money, working with a community board, finance and sustainability pieces, and keeping a company afloat*”. Similarly, CCC1 would like to see third Level ECCE programmes include business management modules. She felt this is essential as ECCE is a business, “*I would like to see the early years degree developed differently or an additional module added*”. She stated that because “*it is a business at the end of the day...we have to be able to manage a business if we want to manage an early years’ service*”. MO

representatives elaborated on the specific elements of business, which should be included in a management qualification, including “*running a business, basic HR skills, finance, accounting skills, business planning*” (MO2), as well as “*marketing [and] communication skills*” (MO1).

Indeed, many researchers highlight knowledge of business management as a core management skill (e.g., Jameson and Watson 1998; Kearns 2010; Moloney and Pettersen 2017). In the experience of CCC2, private ECCE managers tend to come better prepared with the essential business acumen,

Generally, managers that are running their own business as self-employed... tend to be more business-like in their operations and day to day running of their service. And coming in with the business side of it – finance, governance, HR, they tend to be better skilled... and better able to handle that.

MO2 disagreed, claiming that across the board, managers do not have business related knowledge or skills, rather they are trained in areas relating to ECCE, “*I find a lot of managers are qualified in early years but do not have some of the business elements like HR or finance*”. While this particular commentary resonates with Moloney and Pettersen (2017) who found that in general, managers held ECCE qualifications, it is at odds with previous findings in the present study, which suggested that managers simply needed knowledge of child development.

Four participating managers agreed on the need for business skills to be included in a potential management qualification. As such, M5-P, a private manager who holds a Level 8 degree in ECCE, expressed disappointment that her training did not adequately prepare her for managing an early years’ service

There has to be some sort of a business element into the childcare course that we do. I have a level 8... and I don’t think there was a managerial element in that, and it would have been a benefit to have that... some sort of business course that would bring you up to date with your IT development, up to date with your policies.

Likewise, M6-P, also a private manager with experience in business and administration, was acutely aware of the lack of management specific training in the sector. She would like to see this form part of core ECCE training, and claimed that, “*anybody who has just a childcare qualification, the actual management of it [in terms of] setting up policies and looking after accounts, looking after employment... would be difficult*”. Therefore, in her opinion, the manager “*need[s] a childcare qualification [as well as] an admin or a management qualification to go along with it*”. She recognized that business acumen is not general knowledge, stating “*staff management, financial management*

and paperwork in general... those things most people don't know". Conversely, M2-C, a community-based manager opposed the need for training in business management. Comparing ECCE to the formal education sector, she highlighted how schools have the support of an administrator to deal with the business side of running a school. She therefore described the need for management training in ECCE as "*nonsense*" and "*a shame*" and felt that administrative support should be provided by the DCYA, instead of being "*pulled from what you are trained to do*";

It's a shame that you'd have to have it [business management training] because you should be able to employ – schools have school secretaries, and the head mistresses aren't told to do accounts and everything... they [DCYA] should just allow funding for that administrative support... that is trained and has the skillset to do that administrative work ...It just seems nonsense (M2-C).

Training in these business elements would clearly have benefited M1-C, who acknowledged that she was out of her depth when appointed manager and having to deal with finance, accounting, and HR. Signifying a lack of currently available management training in these areas, she would like to see more;

Training around the accountancy stuff. For me that's where my biggest learning curve took when I came here... Because the last crèche I would have worked in everything was given to an accountant...[and] definitely training around the HR side of things. I think it's something a lot of managers are missing it's a massive area.

M2-C also signified the difficulties he faced in his early days as a community-based manager, "*stepping up from being a childcare supervisor into the management role, it was a very steep learning curve*". He would like to see ECCE service managers trained to Degree or Masters level in ECCE, "*if you're looking at a qualification for a manager, I think they'd have to have their degree or masters in the early years...[or] even something like a postgrad... because you need the grounding in the practical side of running a business*". He, too, reflected the need for experience in the field of ECCE before progressing on to the role of a manager, "*even before becoming a manager, people need a good few years' experience working literally from the ground up*"

4.5.4 (c) Learning on the Job

As the findings suggest, ECCE managers are affected by the lack of role specific training and, consistent with the literature, appear to gain the knowledge and skills of managing their ECCE service "*on the job*" (Moloney and Pettersen 2017; Preston 2013). Accordingly, both CCC and MO representatives agreed that "*on the whole, people are learning on the job [and] they figure it out*" (CCC3) through "*trial and error*" (CCC1). MO2 speaks specifically of manager's HR knowledge and skills,

stating, “*they don’t have specific skills in HR, they’re just learning them as they go on*”. Similarly, in the context of knowledge and skills related to “*finance and HR*”, CCC2 states “*some managers are learning that along the way*”.

Managers confirmed that they gained knowledge and skills by “*learn[ing] as [they] go*” (M10-P). In the case of M9-P, who was “*taking over as manager*” when the owner was going on maternity leave, availed of in-house management training. Consequently, “*the owner was here for a couple of weeks before she went on maternity leave, so I was shadowing her*”. Advocating for this mentoring type training, M9-P stated that “*anybody that is going into a new service and taking on the role as manager, there does need to be that handover and guidance for the first couple of weeks*”. In spite of this, she recognised significant flaws in learning the role-specific knowledge and skills through informal in-house training, and feels it is not ideal,

I would have made a good stab at it [management] but there would have been a lot of mistakes made and it would have been a case of learning from my mistakes. But from a professional point of view, I don’t think that would be good enough.

In addition, M3-C reflected on how unprepared she felt taking on her management role. Referring to “*POBAL and the CCSP and all of those [funding schemes]*”, M3-C confirms, “*I didn’t do any of that before I took over as manager, I had nothing to do with any of that*”. She illustrated that she learned how to administer the DCYA funding schemes without any formal training or assistance, as she “*sat in front of the computer and started doing it*”. While this approach helped her to fulfil her management duties, she too identified problems with learning on the job,

It definitely helped me. Now, I suppose, maybe I made mistakes along the way, but you learn from them. I suppose it’s like anything, you learn as you go along, and you learn from your mistakes.

According to CCC3, managers are indirectly prepared for their management role. She alluded to business acumen specifically, and noted that these skills originate from a manager’s past experience in working outside of the ECCE sector, “*understanding of the business management stuff has come through their own life experiences... [like] working in retail...it’s not something that they would have got through their training*”. M7-P agreed, considering, “*business in general, like, anything to with the financial side like payroll, the stuff that has absolutely nothing to do with childcare, that would be your own kind of background*”. Likewise, M6-P and M8-P felt they were better prepared for the business aspects of their management role due to their past employment and educational experiences. M6-P felt that “*I was very lucky that I did business when I went to college, I worked in offices I have no fear of doing accounts, payroll, all that*”.

While M8-P “*did one year of business and I dropped out of it because I just didn’t like it. So, I suppose that did give me the groundwork of what is needed to run a business*”. In her experience, CCC3 noted how prospective managers tend to “*opt out*” of taking on the role of ECCE management due to the lack of training. Relating to areas specific to finance, IT and administration, she noted how,

They [managers] come into the role and now, they’re faced with all this proper governance and finance, and it really puts them off...we find that some really good managers opt out because that’s all too daunting. It’s like, ‘I don’t know how to do that’, ‘I’ve never opened an excel spreadsheet in my life’, ‘I have no idea how to work on an account for a financial return’.

CCC3 therefore believed that “*it all comes back to not having clear path of progression within the sector*”. Mirroring this viewpoint, MO1 indicated that the ambiguous nature of career progression and lack of management training within the ECCE sector sets prospective managers up for failure,

You could be totally confident in the room and then want to progress your career into the next stage which is management, and suddenly...you have to deal with staffing issues and recruitment, all this stuff you have no training or no experience in.

Overall, the findings draw attention to the need for management specific training in which managers learn the essential knowledge and skills to manage their ECCE service effectively. In the context of this study, a number of managers clearly struggled in areas specific to HR management, Financial Management and Curriculum Management. Thus, training in these areas would benefit them considerably, as it would allow them to carry out their roles and responsibilities from a policy and practice perspective. Given that qualifications are predictors of quality (Sylva et al. 2004), the informal in-house training experienced by a number of managers in this study, coupled with the lack of availability of management training represents a further disconnect between management and quality provision. The final section of this chapter discusses participant’s attitudes toward macro-governance of the ECCE sector.

4.6 Attitudes toward Macro-Governance

Chapter Two indicates that the current macro-governance of the ECCE sector in Ireland, is located within an incompetent system, with sectoral responsibility split across 4 domains, the DES, the DCYA, TUSLA and POBAL. Although the DCYA hold primary responsibility for ECCE, competing demands result from other multiple actors as they exert governance influence on various aspects of ECCE provision. The TUSLA Early Years Inspectorate, under the auspices of the DCYA, is therefore responsible for assessing compliance with the Early Years Services Regulations 2016, while the DES Early Years Inspectorate assess the context, nature, appropriateness, and quality of educational provision for children availing of the ECCE scheme. Additionally, POBAL, acting on behalf of the DCYA, inspect compliance with the rules of the various funding schemes including the ECCE scheme and the NCS. Overall, macro-level governance is complex and results in often competing demands of the sector (Moloney 2018; Moloney and Pettersen 2017).

In this study, CCC's and MO's appear critical of many aspects of the how the sector is governed at a macro-level. In acknowledging the huge breadth of responsibilities and complexity of the management role, they expressed concern about the lack of formal training and support for managers. In addition, the findings suggest they are acutely aware of the significant burden placed on managers caused by funding programmes and administrative responsibilities arising from legislation. They consequently identified flaws in the micro-level governing structures both within private and community-based ECCE services. Overall, however, managers in this study are more vocal in terms of their attitudes towards the macro-level governance of the ECCE sector. Accordingly, they recounted their primarily negative experiences of multiple inspections, as well as issues with the rules of the DCYA funding schemes, and a perceived lack of consultation that exists between macro and micro-level ECCE.

4.6.1 Inspection

Findings resonate with Moloney and Pettersen (2017), who found that ECCE managers are struggling to deal with the inordinate Government directives emanating from multiple State bodies. Acknowledging the difficulties for managers, MO1 asserted that they lose autonomy over their service as they comply with State demands,

At the moment, the feeling out there is that [managers] are so hampered by the regulations and the rules and the paperwork and all those things, that they don't really have the freedom to manage because it's all ticking boxes.

Equally, CCC1 suggested, “*there's huge pressure on [managers]... especially from an external source*” because of “*the increase in inspection and rules and regulations around the sector*”. She illustrated the extent of the regulatory regime within the sector, describing it as a “*three-branch compliance process*”. Therefore, “*when we think about the regulations, we need to think about them as being one branch in a three-branch compliance process*” i.e. POBAL, DES and TUSLA. Highlighting the challenges in complying with competing requirements from three State inspectors, CCC2 asserted, “*there's still a bit of variation from inspector to inspector... how inspections are conducted, how reports are put together [and] the different recommendations*”.

Managers expressed particularly strong feelings regarding the current inspection regime. Commenting upon “*all [the] government bodies at the moment*” M1-C concluded that, “*the whole thing is very top heavy*”. In the case of M3-C, “*this year alone [she] had 4 inspections in the service*”. M5-P portrayed the overwhelming burden placed on her to be answerable to the various governing bodies within the sector. Like M1-C, she too describes it as “*very top heavy... everybody wants a piece of you... I think because there's 4 governing bodies over us that there's an awful lot of scope for confusion*”. Consistent with CCC2, M4-C expressed frustration in trying to manage and facilitate “*all the contradicting inspections*” as it “*drives [her] nuts*”. Again, she described the regime as “*a little over the top*” and “*very unfair*”. She provided an example of the difficulties she experienced when addressing conflicting recommendations from TUSLA and POBAL inspectors, leading her to require a “*big extended rule book*”,

You're coming through my door and telling me I've got to have this. You're coming through my door and saying actually no, I don't want you to do this...POBAL would ask you that they staff are to sign the children in and out. I had a TUSLA inspection that said, absolutely, they want to see parents sign the children in and out.

M6-P felt the many demands of the governing bodies and organisations had corroded her autonomy, “*there's always somebody now to be answerable to*”

The most impact for me, it used to be that I felt like I was self-employed. Whereas now, I feel like you're answerable to somebody for everything whether it be the schemes or a policy...it's not really your own anymore...the governance of it has just taken over.

In order to curb the impact of three inspections from various government bodies, two CCC representatives called for a review of the current inspection regime and, the introduction of a single inspection system. In the words of CCC1, “*the best-case*

scenario is an overall compliance regime that ticks all the boxes". Echoing this perspective, CCC2 asserted that a streamlined system of inspection would curtail the downward governmental pressures placed on managers and would be "*more manageable in the longer term*". She criticised the convoluted nature of inspections in the ECCE sector, noting

For the next year or two, it's going to be very challenging to be compliant with everything that's required...I don't think it's sustainable to continue for the fact that there are 3 different organisations that inspect childcare services – TUSLA, DES and POBAL for all the funding. That needs to be streamlined down to one organization somehow.

Interestingly, MO1 would like to see a new online platform developed, used to review regulatory and legislative documentation upon inspection, because in her opinion, "*the inspections should be looking at practice more*" instead of "*sitting there with an inspector and going through all your files*". She stated,

It doesn't seem like a good use of anybody's time...in an ideal world you'd have something like the Revenue system where you can keep all that stuff up to date and then you file it and its checked. And you don't have to worry about it being there on site to be inspected.

In addition, five of the ten managers were conscious of the flaws in having a split system of regulation and inspection and wished to see a review of the current inspection regime, which M7-P described as having "*no consistency involved*". Accordingly, M5-P noticed a "*lack of joined up thinking*", while M3-C similarly noted that "*they [macro-governance] are not joining the dots with any of them [inspections]*" and stressed, "*they should all be linking into each other.*" In common with the CCC's, M6-P argued "*they [macro-governance] need to come up with ways that make things streamlined and simpler*". Moloney (2019a) echoes these calls for a streamlined inspection system, arguing that such a system requires "*co-operation and goodwill*" from each stakeholder, each with respectively varying remits (p.35).

4.6.1 (a) Enforcement Style

Moloney (2014b, 2015a) reports that ECCE managers were critical of the heavy-handed style of enforcement by the Early Years Inspectorate from the HSE (now TUSLA). In addition, Early Childhood Ireland (2012, 2015) reported managers voicing a negative attitude to inspections, the demeanour of State inspectors and feelings of fear around inspection.

In the context of this study, M2-C articulated how “*depending on your inspector... they can be very demeaning and powerful*”. Drawing from his experience of speaking with other ECCE managers, M2-C claimed that they are fearful of State inspectors “*I do meet an awful lot of managers who are living in dread of inspections ... afraid that they are going to break the rules or... that they are going to be non-compliant*”. M6-P rationalised this fear, asserting that inspectors “*don’t come often enough so there is that fear factor... everybody now is panicking if they arrive*”. Highlighting the sense of fear engendered through inspection, M4-C described feelings of fear and a perception that inspectors are “*very dictatorial*”. She revealed that “*we’ve had some awful inspections ...in terms of ‘no, you’ll speak when you’re spoken to’ kind of attitude... It shouldn’t be like that. You shouldn’t be frightened of being inspected*”. Providing an example of this dictatorial approach, she explained

We’ve a lovely self-draining water play area...I got an inspectorate, and it was put on the red thing for change, because she didn’t agree with that being on the floor. And I said, ‘were going to have to agree to differ on that’ and she said ‘there’ll be no agreeing to differ’...The next inspectorate that we had 3 years later held it up as a quality piece. So that’s what you’re working with (M4-C).

According to M6-P, inspectors come with negative predispositions, and suggested, “*there’s a focus on that, oh somebody’s not meeting all these standards*”. Sharing this perspective, M5-P noted, “*when they’re landed on you...the whole ethos is ‘I’m going to catch you out now, I’m going to point out all your faults to you’*”. She outlined an issue she had with a DES inspector,

She [inspector] went between 2 rooms and didn’t see everything in the one room, didn’t see everything in the other room but that’s what she wrote about, that she didn’t see the timer being used in this room, she didn’t see wall charts in that room being used.

She therefore believed “*the whole emphasis on the inspection is from a negative viewpoint*”.

Reflecting a deeply held suspicion of inspection, five of the ten participating managers suggested that TUSLA inspectors “*have their own spin on [the regulations]*” (M8-P), and insinuated “*half the time they could be making them up*” (M3-C). Accordingly, in the 12 years that M2-C has been managing his service, he has seen a variation in TUSLA demands. He explained how,

With some of the inspectors, you were either lucky that you had a really tuned in inspector or you had an inspector who sort of went out on their own... the regulations were there but they made up their own stuff as they went along.

M10-P also highlighted challenges and frustrations in facilitating TUSLA inspections. She perceived that, “*you’re given the regulations, you’re going by them but then these [inspectors] are adding in their own little silly things... some of the things they say*

aren't regulation, but you have to do it anyway". According to M7-P, *"there's no rhyme or reason behind most of the things they say"*. She reflected on an incident with a TUSLA inspector where she did not have a specific policy as required.

You get a list of policies and procedures...and they'll [TUSLA] say 'yep that's great you have that, that and that. But you don't have this policy' and like, they just pluck this out...and you're making up this policy because they said so.

The findings indicate that some managers are also fearful of POBAL inspections and the associated concern of the State withholding funding due to a non-compliance or poor inspection. The issue of financial sustainability, which features strongly throughout this chapter, and within Chapter Two, is again echoed in participant's concerns. Consequently, M5-P anxiously wondered whether a POBAL inspector can *"take our money off us? can she affect us? ... [it's] not very pleasant... the worry was, are we meeting the benchmark? Is somebody going to take funding off us?"*. M2-C further highlighted manager's anxiety at the thought of being in breach of the contractual arrangements of the funding schemes, which may result in reduced or withheld funding. He mentioned *"the fear of being in breach of funding schemes and then it impacting on money being taken away from services"*.

4.6.2 Macro to Micro Consultation

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), portrays the interactions between the micro-system and the other layers of the ecosystem as bi-directional influences. However, findings in this study concur with Moloney and Pettersen (2017), Neylon (2012) and Oke (2019), pointing to limited consultation or co-operation between the macro-level ECCE governing bodies and ECCE managers. Thus, resulting in fractured bi-directional relationships between macro and micro-level actors.

Of the six managers that alluded to lack of consultation, M2-C and M6-P were particularly vocal in this regard. M6-P described how she would like to see managers and state inspectors *"work together"*. In her opinion, *"consultation is the biggest thing...between TUSLA, all the organisations even POBAL...they should come in and help us to do the best we can... not come in and criticise us"*. She called for more frequent consultative-type inspections, to *"take that fear factor out of it"*. She references the public exposés of poor practice within *"Breach of Trust"* and *"Crèches Behind Closed Doors"* as evidence of why the current approach to inspection and consultation *"[is] not working"*

I would encourage and prefer way more inspections. Not a just pop in out of the blue after 2 years of nothing... how many times have we seen that they have been in playschools and everything is fine and a month later it's on Primetime because there's something going on but they didn't see it, or they did see it and they were going to come back in 6 months. Now that doesn't work, that's pointless (M6-P).

TUSLA's Annual Report (2019), show that, of the 4,435 services who were registered with TUSLA in 2018, 2,513 were inspected, indicating an inspection rate of 56% Similar low inspection rates of 55% were recorded in 2013, the same year as the *Breach of Trust* documentary (Moloney 2014a).

Managers also spoke of how inspectorate qualifications impede the relationship between managers and inspectors. M2-C for instance, suggested that TUSLA inspectors lack empathy and perspective. Commenting upon the fact that many TUSLA inspectors are Public Health Nurses who do not have experience in the field of ECCE practice (Moloney 2018a), M2-C suggested, *“those from TUSLA are coming from a totally different profession to ours. So, they need to sort of have a realistic expectation of what works in the early years and what doesn't”*. However, as mentioned in Chapter Two, the eligibility criteria for TUSLA inspectors has been extended to include those holding a Level 8 degree in ECCE; Child Psychology or Social Care/Work (DCYA 2018b).

In addition to concerns about inspectorate qualifications, M2-C highlighted the need for *“better consultation and negotiations between TUSLA and the practitioners”*. However, he maintains that the lack of perspective from the *“hierarchy”* of the ECCE sector has resulted in a *“massive kickback from services”*. In particular, he referenced the National Early Years Protest in February 2020, conducted to highlight the lack of appropriate funding, poor working conditions and unsustainability in the sector (O'Brien 2020).

M2-C therefore explains that,

There is this this whole element of the hierarchy that are up there overseeing it all don't get where the services are at the moment...I think it's talking back to the DCYA, talking back to TUSLA, talking back to the Government around what's best. And that's what happened...with the protest. People talking back.

Also referring to the Early Years Protest, M3-C suggested the need for perspective from all governing organisations. She proposed, *“unless you are on the ground and unless you see what's going on, you don't really understand it... I suppose that's what a lot of the protest and everything in the last while was about”*. M7-P was equally critical of, what she perceived as, the lack of collaborative decision making between the DCYA and ECCE services, suggesting that the creation and implementation of such policies should be shaped by those putting them into practice.

The Department just put out these things that have to be done and they don't liaise with us to say, 'does this suit you?' or 'what do you think of this?'. They have no idea about what goes on, on the ground.

From an ecological perspective, it is evident that managers in this study feel that stronger bi-directional influences are required between micro-level governance at policy level and micro-setting level.

4.6.3 DCYA Funding Schemes

Administering funding schemes is a significant responsibility of ECCE service managers since the introduction of the ECCE Scheme in 2010 (see Chapter Two, and section 4.4 above). The findings suggest that a number of CCC representatives and managers are critical of these funding schemes for a multitude of different reasons.

For example, both CCC1 and M7-P commented on the convoluted nature of the DCYA funding scheme rules and administration; *“each of those funding schemes each has their own set of terms and conditions and compliance issues...And it's just very, very difficult for managers to remain on top of it and fully compliant”* (CCC1). Congruent with CCC1, M7-P experienced this difficulty first-hand, as *“every scheme has its own set of rules and regulations”*. Therefore, *“the ECCE is managed different to the NCS, and the NCS is managed different to CETS. They all have their own ways of managing it and rules to comply with in order to be eligible and compliant.”* (M7-P). She continued to identify a significant impact of abiding by the contractual arrangements of the DCYA funded schemes – the financial sustainability of her service. Referring to *“one scheme in particular, the CCS(P)”*, she considered how *“ridiculous”* it is for the DCYA to withdraw funding from services due to the unpredictable nature of family life,

If you sign the child up for say 6 hours and the child gets collected before those 6 hours are up, we're docked. So, what are you supposed to do? If the parent comes to collect their child, you can't say 'oh sorry you can't come to collect them before 5 o'clock'. That's ridiculous... How are we supposed to balance our finances and income?

M10-P also had trouble with the ECCE funding scheme rules, which, she described as *“not fair”*. She indicates that managers should not be held responsible for children's attendance at the service and *“wish[es] the government had done these schemes between the government and the parent. And nothing to do with the crèche and paid the parent”*. Referring specifically to the NCS, she cited the contractual arrangements, which outline that managers must report persistent under-attendance for a period of 8 weeks to the DCYA through the Early Years Hive (DCYA 2019d). She therefore stated,

If I have a kid that continuously goes home early on a Tuesday and a Friday ...[and] if that's flagged as an ongoing thing, well then, my funding is reduced for that child.

But...I have to keep a full space for that child even though I'm not going to get full money...and that's not fair... [so] if it was between the parents and the government, the parent would know then 'oh well I'm after getting cut my childcare money, I better make sure little Harry is in everyday'.

Similarly, M4-C has problems with the NCS and, in particular, the hourly funding structure associated with the scheme. She spoke of her work with children from disadvantaged and high-risk backgrounds, who “*may have been homeless, or they have come to me for monitoring because the child is on the child protection list*”. She therefore believed that the monitoring of allocated subsidies to families in these particular situations by POBAL is “*ridiculous*” and “*abusive*” as “*it's an absolute golden kick that you've got the parents up and out ... and [to] bring the child*”. She therefore argued, “*you cannot audit children who have come in from disadvantaged, or high need situations on an hourly basis... That is ridiculous. And I actually think it's abusive*”. She continued to describe how “*there's no quarter given*” by POBAL Compliance Officers as, upon inspection of the child's attendance records, subsidies are cut due to persistent under-attendance,

The child isn't able for that – let's just call it not for the full time. But you're getting them in for an hour and you're working with the parents...But if I get a compliance visit in the morning, they [POBAL] will cut their hours by half because they will say they're only in for that part session... It's just too strict...I find that really frustrating (M4-C)

While the onus is placed on POBAL for the administration of ECCE funding programmes, and inspection of compliance with such schemes, the DCYA holds responsibility for the establishment of funding rules and the removal of such funds from services leading to significant sustainability issues. Given that sustainability is a hallmark of quality provision (Moloney and Pettersen 2017), it is apparent that policy established at macro-level compromises the sustainability of services and thus, by extension, threatens the provision of quality ECCE.

Again, the issue of bi-directional relationships between macro-level governance structures and micro-setting level emerges as a significant concern. The findings point to a fractious relationship between the two, which leads to stressful and frustrating situations for managers, threatening the very sustainability of ECCE services.

4.7 Conclusion

Chapter Four presented and discussed the research findings. Overall, these findings illustrate that macro-level governance of the sector, significantly affects the role of the micro-level ECCE manager, and their ability to provide a quality ECCE service.

It seems that the lack of political will to streamline macro-level governance structures has led to considerable fragmentation at a micro-setting level in multiple domains, ranging from governance, support and inspection. In fact, the findings point to considerable differences between community-based and private-based provision in terms of micro-level governance structures, macro-level support and attitudes towards essential knowledge and skills. Thus, community-based ECCE managers enjoy a more advantageous position in comparison to their private sector counterparts, as they can draw from a knowledgeable and skilled BoM, receive administrative support and benefit from community-specific funding. Meanwhile, private managers are solely accountable for all matters of their service, cope with the demands of the management role on their own and rely on their own past educational and employment experiences to support them in fulfilling their demanding and multi-faceted responsibilities. Unsurprisingly, the findings suggest that, in light of this, private managers felt more overwhelmed with responsibility due to their unsupported, complex and demanding role. Consequently, the diversity that exists in ECCE governance and management structures results in inconsistencies regarding the manager's capacity to provide a quality service. In this regard, having access to a knowledgeable and skilled BoM, which is perceived as another layer of management, enables community-based managers to carry out their roles and responsibilities. Conversely, private-based managers reported feelings of frustration and of being overwhelmed by their management role. However, the City and County Childcare Committees emerged a key source of support for all managers, both community and private. In fact, managers described the CCCs as a lifeline for managers in Ireland.

In addition, the lack of career progression within the sector has allowed for the emergence of various pathways to ECCE management. Consequently, coupled with the absence of a mandatory training requirement, variations in the levels of management preparation exist. Overall, however, the findings from the small sample suggest that a small number of managers required additional support to recognising many areas of

their core responsibilities and skillsets, as they were not fully aware of areas relating to HR management, curriculum management and financial management for example. Therefore, given that these areas are vital for the development of a quality ECCE service (Moloney and Pettersen 2017), in the context of this study, quality ECCE management and more broadly, quality provision, is compromised in certain instances.

Additionally, participants spoke of the overwhelming responsibility placed on ECCE managers in coping with a vast array of responsibilities. Therefore, while just two managers spoke of how they delegated responsibilities to other members of staff in their service, as mentioned, all participants highlighted local level CCC structures as a vital resource for management support. Therefore, the findings per se point to a clear need for ECCE management training. Although the notion of management training was well received overall, a small number of managers felt that experience is more useful in preparing managers for their role, while other participants were concerned that the extent of downward government pressures placed on managers in the current policy landscape impedes them from undertaking such training.

Furthermore, all participants agreed the demands emanating from numerous State bodies were both overwhelming and constant. Thus, participating managers believed they were pulled in different directions as they comply with policy and legislation (Early Years Services Regulations 2016, multiple inspections and the DCYA funding schemes). The fact is, they are confined to their office due to the time-consuming administrative demands, which in turn, hampers their ability to effectively manage their staff, manage curricular experiences and monitor the children. Coupled with the issues of unsustainability within services, and the recruitment and retention crisis, the managers capacity to provide a quality ECCE service is consequently undermined by macro-level ECCE policy and legislative directives. Bolstered by the deeply-rooted issues with the inspection regime, inspectorate enforcement style, and lack of consultation, overall, findings point to a fractious relationship between macro-level and micro-level ECCE.

Drawing upon the findings presented in chapter four, the next chapter proposes a series of recommendations for policy, practice and further research.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This research study sought to explore the relationship between governance and management and, quality early childhood care and education provision in an Irish context. It comes at a time of unprecedented change within the ECCE sector in Ireland over a relatively short time. This includes the establishment of the ECCE Scheme (2010), and its expansion in 2018, the Early Years Services Regulations 2016, which introduced a mandatory qualification at QQI Level 5, a new focus upon management and governance within settings, the introduction of DES education focussed inspections of settings participating in the ECCE scheme (2016), and the National Childcare Scheme (2019). As a result, managers face considerable accountability demands and governance and management responsibilities from a range of State bodies. Thus, rendering governance, management and accountability as hallmarks of quality ECCE as they ensure that children receive appropriate care, are safe, have positive experiences and can develop and learn in a quality service (TUSLA 2018a). The findings of this research study underscore the relationship between governance and management, and quality ECCE provision.

Utilising Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory as a conceptual framework, this qualitative research study involved 15 interviews with a range of ECCE stakeholders, comprising micro-level setting managers (n=10); County Childcare Committee (n=3) and Membership Organisation (n=2) representatives working in a supportive role at meso-level. As illustrated in chapter four, the primary research data generated through these interviews provided in-depth insights into the relationship between governance and management and quality ECCE provision. Critically, the empirical data uncovered ECCE managers' lived experiences of the Irish macro-policy context in terms of legislative requirements, and the reality of translating this into practice at micro-setting level.

Chapter five therefore, presents a summary of the research findings and proposes a series of recommendations relating to policy, practice and further research.

5.2 Summary of Research Findings

While this study clearly illustrates the relationship between governance, management and quality ECCE provision, it points to the vulnerability of this relationship. In particular, the findings highlight how a small number of managers were unsupported in recognising their responsibilities to oversee, support and maintain quality ECCE. Overall, the findings confirm that macro-level governance, split between the DCYA and the DES determines the roles and responsibilities of ECCE managers at micro setting level. Moreover, supports, or lack thereof at macro-level, affects the manager's ability to provide a quality ECCE service. Likewise, in terms of practice at micro setting level, the managers knowledge and skillset too, determines their capacity to translate macro-level policy demands into everyday practice. In common with Moloney and Pettersen (2017), the findings support the notion that management knowledge and skills (e.g., ECCE policy and practice, HR Management, Financial Management, Business Management, Curriculum Management) are critical aspects of effective management in the field of early childhood care and education.

5.2.1 Competent Management

As mentioned throughout this dissertation, there is no mandatory qualification requirement for ECCE managers in Ireland. While the inextricable relationship between qualifications and quality has been established (OECD 2012; Rodd 2013; Sylva et al. 2004; Urban et al. 2012; Urban 2014), it is clear that, over the past 25 years, ECCE policy has consistently ignored the need for managers to hold the essential skills or knowledge required to effectively manage an ECCE service at micro-setting level. In the words of a participating Childcare Committee (CCC1) representative, the reality is that the manager “*sets the scene for the rest of the service*” (CCC1). Yet, while a manager does not need specific management training, s/he is required to engage in multiple increasingly complex management roles including recruitment, financial management, curricular oversight, collaborate with key stakeholders in the sector, administration and so on. As indicated in this study, the lack of policy attention to the complex and demanding ECCE management role leaves many managers unprepared for the reality of managing an ECCE setting. The multiple pathways to management that emerged through the research findings compound this issue. Thus, it seems that while a small number of managers actively sought a management role from the outset of their career, others became managers through gradual career progression, with the majority

entering management through special circumstances including accidentally. While clearly beneficial to the managers participating in this study, the support provided by the CCC's represents minimal State effort to build management capacity. As such, the State and by extension, the sector has depended almost exclusively upon CCC support since 2000. Consistent with the Early Years Services Regulations (Govt. of Ireland, 2016) this study signifies that governance, management and accountability are indicators of quality provision. It therefore seems illogical and unacceptable that the State has not introduced a qualification requirement for ECCE managers. It is clear from the findings that ECCE managers require a combination of pre-service management training and/or continuous professional development to equip them for their onerous management roles and responsibilities. As the findings indicate, HR management, which is now a legal requirement (Govt. of Ireland 2016), is a significant challenge across both private and community-based provision. In the present study, one community-based and one private ECCE manager required additional management support with their HR responsibilities, signifying the depth of knowledge and skill required to dispense these management functions. Thus, although CCC and MO representatives felt otherwise, a number of participating managers did not perceive HR as a core knowledge requirement. The findings convey how a small number of managers require additional support to recognise the full extent of their legal HR responsibilities, as they suggested HR is only required for bigger services employing more staff. Clearly, a lack of knowledge or understanding of HR practices is detrimental, undermining parent's and stakeholder confidence in the setting, children's experiences and overall, sustainability and viability (Moloney and Pettersen, 2017).

Notwithstanding how all five meso-support representatives and seven participating managers felt positively about a potential management qualification, they also expressed concern about introducing any qualification requirement. These concerns relate to the stresses and strains on managers in the current, constantly changing policy landscape. None the less, CCC and MO representatives highlighted the need for managers to undertake training in areas of business and finance. However, some managers disagreed, and felt that these areas have "*absolutely nothing to do with childcare*" (M7-P). Accordingly, M4-C declared that the DCYA should "*allow funding for that administrative support... because you can't do everything well*". While seven managers felt that a qualification in ECCE is suitable for preparing prospective managers for their role, three mentioned the need to develop current undergraduate degree level

ECCE training programmes, to include a managerial element, which enables managers to gain the knowledge and skills required to manage curriculum, work with parents, implement policy etc.

5.2.2 Competent Management Structure

Findings point to considerable inconsistencies in terms of macro-level support for ECCE managers across the entire sector, whether community-based or private provision. Moreover, these inconsistencies appear to affect the quality of ECCE in terms of micro-level management and governance. This manifests through micro-level organisational structures within settings, where in the main, private ECCE settings operate a flat and condensed management structure comprising of a manager, a deputy manager and a supervisor. As such, a private ECCE manager is solely responsible for all matters regarding their service. In addition, private ECCE managers rely on their own skills and expertise obtained through previous experience of training and employment within and outside the sector to support them in carrying out their core managerial roles and responsibilities, with little recourse to macro-level support. For example, while private managers who studied business previously, felt more prepared for the business aspect of their role, most private managers looked to owners/co-owners and managers outside their service for support and guidance. As a result, private managers felt more overwhelmed by their responsibilities by comparison to participating community-based managers who have the support and protection of a Board of Management. Overall, while private managers call upon CCCs for support and advice in relation to policy and legislative compliance, they clearly indicated that they handed over their human resource management duties to private, external companies. One has to question the feasibility of this strategy in the longer term and how it affects the overall governance and management of an ECCE setting. Does it mean that managers are one-step removed from practice within their settings? In outsourcing responsibilities to external organisations, it must be asked whether managers become increasingly unfamiliar with carrying out aspects of their role, such as building positive and constructive relationships with staff, awareness of employment legislation and HR procedures, and all aspects of the Early Years Services Regulations 2016.

Meanwhile, a number of community-based managers considered themselves “*lucky*” to have administrative assistance, access to funding and, utilise the expertise of their BoM. However, the CCC and MO representatives reinforced the need for BoM members to

have specific knowledge and skills. In particular, HR, financial and business management skills emerged as critical. From the ECCE manager's perspective, in-depth knowledge of ECCE policy and practice is essential to help them manage their setting. In addition to the BoM, the Charities Governance Code (2020) further consolidates community-based manager's legislative accountability requirements, underscoring good accountability and transparency throughout their everyday practice, thus enhancing the quality of ECCE provision. Combined, these management and accountability structures exhibit a strong culture of micro-setting governance in community-based ECCE services. Therefore, even though private and community-based managers share the same core responsibilities and knowledge requirements (Moloney and Pettersen, 2017), clearly, the ecological nature of community-based governance, where the manager is the "*middle bit in terms of management*" (CCC1), and the BoM "*another layer*" (MO2) of management, is more conducive to effective ECCE management. More broadly, it is also conducive to quality provision because of its strong culture of governance, accountability, and transparency, and the opportunity for its BoM to include members with the knowledge base required to advise and support managers within a community-based setting.

5.2.3 Competent ECCE System

It is also evident that ECCE managers struggle with the staffing issues within the sector currently. Managers highlighted the difficulties of being at the coalface of the recruitment and retention crisis. Indeed, the empirical evidence suggests that the current recruitment crisis places managers at risk of employing staff who are unsuitable and unfit to provide quality ECCE, thus compromising their legal requirements under the Early Years Services Regulations 2016. Given that "decisions made about staffing will be decisions made about the quality of services" (Oberheumer and Ulich 1997, p.3), this study highlights how the manager's ability to provide quality ECCE through the employment of highly qualified, suitable and competent staff is significantly undermined by macro-level policy. While State funding is key to resolving the issue of staff turnover, underinvestment by the State in Ireland throughout the past 25 years, perpetuates a view of ECCE as an undervalued sector and an unattractive career option. Regrettably, in Ireland, ECCE staff are among the lowest paid of all professionals (SIPTU, 2019a; 2020) with staff turnover standing at 24% (POBAL 2019). Consequently, Moloney (2019b) argues that staff have had enough and are voting with

their feet. Undoubtedly, such high levels of staff turnover impedes the quality of ECCE provision (Moloney 2019b). As noted by the OECD (2012) consistent staff turnover compromises children's capacity to form meaningful relationships with their caregivers, and significantly reduce the development of nurturing and stimulating interactions that are vital to young children's development.

The sectors' fragmented and haphazard system of governance, under the DCYA, the DES, TUSLA and POBAL, clearly affects many aspects of the manager's role. This disjointed system of governance and the impact of various "*top heavy*" policy directives from a multitude of State bodies featured prominently within the research findings. In particular, every participant highlighted how policy and legislative compliance is a primary management responsibility. They further stressed how the administrative burden, which is integral to policy and legislative compliance, significantly hampers their capacity to monitor quality ECCE provision. Therefore, managers spend increasing and unsustainable time in the office, overwhelmed by the vast amount of administrative directives and demands. As a result, they expressed concern about undertaking potential management training, which they feared would add further to downward governmental pressures. The current incompetent system in Ireland precludes manager's engagement with essential training, and by extension, impedes their capacity to effectively manage their settings, and provide quality ECCE.

Moreover, participants described the current inspection regime as '*over the top*' and in need of review. Unsurprisingly, managers felt that complying with competing requirements from a multitude of State inspectors is highly stressful and challenging. Coupled with the deeply-rooted lack of trust in inspectorate enforcement, the lack of collaborative bi-directional consultation between managers and inspectors and, anomalies within the DCYA funding scheme rules, managers were overtly dissatisfied with "*the powers that be*" (M2-P) and felt that their concerns were falling on deaf ears. A fractious relationship therefore exists between macro-level and micro-level governance and management.

5.3 Recommendation in Relation to Policy and Practice

Drawing upon the research findings, the following sections propose a series of recommendations directed at policy, practice and future research. However, it is important to note that recommendations are inter-related, such that, policy recommendations, in turn, have significant implications for practice within ECCE settings.

There is no doubt that quality ECCE is dependent upon effective management. Thus, managers must be competent in their roles and responsibilities. The researcher recommends therefore, that:

- The State undertakes a review of management competencies and skills by mapping these onto the Early Years Services Regulations, 2016, which have resulted in major reform in micro-level management. Although these regulations placed a focus on micro-level management structures and introduced stringent recruitment responsibilities, the State have consistently avoided introducing either a pre-service training requirement or a comprehensive system of CPD to support managers in carrying out their complex and demanding roles and responsibilities.
- Aligned to the aforementioned recommendation, the DCYA establishes a working-group to develop an ECCE management qualification. In collaboration with the DCYA, DES and TUSLA, this working group should comprise key stakeholders such as ECCE managers, CCC, MO and Voluntary Childcare Organisation representatives, and third level lecturers with expertise in the area of ECCE management and governance. In the context of the findings in this study, it is not acceptable that managers simply learn on the job. In terms of the implications for practice, this role-specific training builds the manager's capacity to execute their onerous roles and responsibilities and gain in-depth understanding of policy translation and implementation. Thus, better preparing them to manage their ECCE service and reducing the risk of managers floundering in every-day practice. Overall, it ensures that prospective managers are aware of the contribution that effective management makes to developing and maintaining a quality ECCE service. It also equips them with the tools to engage at the level required by the Early Years Services Regulations 2016. In essence, management training would help to raise quality standards across the sector.

- In line with the objectives of the Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines (PACG) (DES 2019), additional funding should be provided to third level colleges, universities and institutions providing QQ1 Level 7/Level 8 degree level ECCE training to review existing ECCE programmes, with a view to introducing at least 2 ECCE Management modules over the duration of the programme. In addition to this primary degree, graduates who wish to take up a management position within an early childhood setting should hold at least three to five years' experience of working in the sector. Although five of the ten participating managers associated potential management training with needing higher qualifications, the proposed ECCE training does not prepare students to manage an ECCE service. On the contrary, its purpose is to prepare ECCE educators to work directly with children, while introducing them to the policy and practice landscape and the reality of management in the context of ECCE. Therefore, in line with the objectives of the PACG, this measure would support the development of degree level training that effectively prepares graduates for the many complex and challenging roles in the field of ECCE, one of which is management (DES 2019).
- The DCYA establishes a national mentoring programme whereby mentors work directly with existing managers through workshops and individual, in-setting mentoring. Bearing in mind, that participating managers depend upon the CCC's for support currently, this locally based support mechanism should be strengthened. Consequently, the DCYA must increase funding to the CCC's so they can employ mentors who collaborate with their Local Enterprise Board to develop and provide such mentoring support. In terms of micro-level practice, a mentoring programme would identify areas of management practice that require attention and support managers to enhance such practices. It also acts as an on-going, consistent support for managers and provides them with opportunities for regular CPD.
- The DCYA develops a targeted CPD programme focusing on HR management. Aligned to the previous recommendation, the CCC's should collaborate with their Local Enterprise Board to provide this HR specific training to ECCE managers. This CPD would greatly benefit managers at micro-setting level, raising awareness of core HR legislation, policies and procedures, thus, reducing the risk of ECCE managers floundering with their staff management roles and responsibilities. It is not appropriate that any manager would justify the size of a service as reason for not requiring HR knowledge. The fact that high-quality ECCE is dependent on both

the quality of personnel involved in the service and the quality of support provided to such personnel renders HR as a core management responsibility, and vital to the development and maintenance of quality ECCE. Therefore, this targeted CPD programme would play a vital role in further preparing managers for an area of ECCE management that contributes to a quality service which, as indicated through the findings, managers clearly struggle with.

- Bearing in mind participating managers concerns regarding their ability to access training, due to time-consuming administrative duties and high-pressure work environments; any training, CPD or mentoring must suit the complex, demanding and rigorous management role. Therefore, blended learning techniques using a combination of online instruction and face-to-face teaching should be utilised. In addition, the State must fund this training by expanding the ‘Learner Fund’ to subsidise the cost of training. In terms of practice, these measures would allow managers to participate in role-specific training as well as remaining in their role as ECCE manager.

As evidenced through the findings, not only is competent management at micro-setting level essential, macro-level governance is equally important. Thus, the researcher recommends that, in keeping with the proposals of the current Minister for Children, Disability, Equality and Integration, Roderic O’Gorman TD,

- The State must establish a single system of governance, which is responsible for streamlining policy, legislation and inspection in the sector. This long-awaited policy measure would greatly benefit managers at micro-setting level, by reducing or eliminating the departmental fragmentation that managers clearly struggle with and, is a characteristic of an incompetent system of ECCE (Moloney and McKenna, 2018). A streamlined system of ECCE administration would greatly reduce both the amount of inspections managers must facilitate, and the time spent on administrative practices for a myriad of State bodies. Thus, making life easier for managers, and making policy translation and implementation at micro-level more manageable. Leadership and co-ordination at macro-government level, and a unified monitoring and evaluation system would move Ireland closer to a competent ECCE system.

- The State must follow through with the commitments set out in *First 5*, regarding the establishment of an “appropriately skilled and sustainable professional workforce that is supported and valued” (DCYA 2018a, p.103). While plans are underway to develop a Workforce Development Plan, it is vital that ECCE managers contribute to this initiative by participating in the call for submissions, and in the imminent programme of consultation with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. In keeping with the objectives of *First 5*, it is hoped that the pending Workforce Development Plan strengthens perceptions of ECCE as an attractive career choice by establishing a career development framework and raising the value placed on the ECCE workforce as a whole (DES 2018a). Furthermore, the State must commit to increased sustainable investment in the sector, enabling employers to provide more favourable working conditions that attract and retain staff (Ibid.). These measures would help to reduce the burden experienced by managers in terms of recruiting and retaining staff in a sector that has an attrition rate of 24% annually (POBAL 2019a).

Finally, given the indisputable findings that illustrate the considerable benefits of supports provided by a BoM to community-based managers, it is essential that the State ensure a competent system of micro-level governance and management across private and community-based provision. In order to do so, the researcher recommends that:

- All BoM members should have the relevant expertise required to support the manager in their role. As illustrated through the findings, BoM members with expertise in the areas of finance, accounting and ECCE policy and practice significantly supported community-based ECCE managers. Drawing from the previous recommendation regarding the need for HR specific CPD for all managers, recruiting a member knowledgeable in the area of HR would also be helpful in this regard. In terms of practice, this ensures high quality, effective management of all community-based ECCE services and reduces the risk of BoM’s being unable to support the manager.
- The DCYA examines measures to align the management and governance structures in community-based ECCE with that of private-based provision. Therefore, the knowledge, skills and expertise of parents for example, could be utilised to establish a similar structure within the private sector. This measure allows for the development of a competent management structure as well as a source of support for the ECCE manager.

5.4 Recommendation in Relation to Further Research

While this study acknowledges the vast amount of research undertaken in the area of quality in ECCE, it recognises the paucity of research relating to governance and management, and its contribution to enhancing quality ECCE provision. Therefore, the researcher recommends that:

- In their future Early Years Sector Profiles, POBAL should include a section relating to the qualification levels of ECCE managers across the sector in Ireland. This would provide crucial statistics and a comprehensive picture of the current state of levels and differences in qualification levels as well as identifying whether managers hold management specific training, thus informing future policy development in this area.
- Future researchers should question the reasons behind key governing ECCE organisations; TUSLA, DES and Better Start, placing an embargo on supporting research outside of their respective organisations. As mentioned in Chapter Three, these core macro-level stakeholders actively pursue a policy where they do not engage in research conducted by third level institutions. This approach to stakeholder involvement and engagement is questionable and is detrimental to research conducted in the area of ECCE especially. Consequently, although this research reveals the lived experiences of managers with regard to macro-level governance, experiences bolstered by the perspectives of CCC/MO representatives, direct macro-level perspectives are missing. From an ecological perspective, and given the direct relationship between macro-level governance, management roles and responsibilities and the quality of ECCE, it is not appropriate that publicly funded bodies prevent researchers from including macro-level perspectives.
- County Childcare Committees undertake a needs analysis with ECCE managers. This study would explore areas of their role where managers require ongoing professional development. It would also add to the currently limited research regarding governance and management of ECCE services by providing further insight into the knowledge and skills required to manage an ECCE service.

5.5 Conclusion

It is apparent that the split system of macro-level governance and inordinate regulatory oversight has clearly taken its toll on managers. Accordingly, managers reported working in a highly stressful work environment where feelings of frustration, insecurity and mistrust of macro-level governance are rife. The current system, which burdens managers with expansive administrative directives and a vast array of State inspections, is clearly unsustainable and not conducive to quality ECCE provision.

Although much research points to the importance of a quality, skilled and effective early childhood care and education manager (Moloney and Pettersen 2017; Moyles 2006; Sylva et al. 2004), in the context of this study, consistent quality ECCE management is difficult to achieve in the Irish context. Therefore, while the ideological stance embedded within macro-level policies create expectations relating to manager's capacity at micro-level in terms of implementing the complex, vast and ever-changing policy demands, in reality, this research suggest that a number of participating managers were not adequately supported to recognise many specific knowledge bases and skills that are central to legislative compliance, such as HR Management, Financial Management and Curriculum Management. Although the State have placed onerous management responsibilities upon setting managers, it has overlooked the fundamental ability of these managers to engage at the level required. It is, therefore, disconcerting to note that managers feel unprepared for their role. There is a glaring mis-match between macro-level expectations and manager's capacity to meet them. The current system of macro-level governance, which overlooks the fundamental relationship between management and governance and quality ECCE provision, is not conducive to creating a high-quality competent system of micro-level governance within services. Against the backdrop of the RTÉ documentaries (2013; 2019) and, the Hanafin report (2014), which illustrate so starkly the impact of ineffective management upon children's experiences in ECCE services, it must be asked, why the State has not acted in this regard?

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Participant Information Letter



Participant Information Letter

Rebecca Knox
Tullaherin,
Co. Kilkenny.

To whom it may concern,

My name is Rebecca Knox, and I am currently undertaking a Masters through Research in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick under the supervision of Dr. Mary Moloney. My research thesis, entitled, *Ideology vs. Reality – An Exploration of the Relationship between Governance, Management and Quality Early Childhood Care and Education Provision* is concerned with governance and management and their relationship with quality provision within the Early Childhood Care and Education sector.

What is the purpose of the research and why is it being undertaken?

This unique research study comes at a time of unprecedented change within Ireland's ECCE sector resulting in managers of ECCE services being subjected to considerable accountability demands and governance and management responsibilities. This is seen through the establishment of the ECCE Scheme (2010), the implementation of the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016, introduction of a mandatory Level 5 QQI qualification requirement within these regulations, an increase focus upon management and governance practices within DES and TUSLA inspections, and the introduction of the National Childcare Scheme (2019).

Considering these developments, there has been very little political attention paid to the manager's role itself, both in terms of support for managers in governing and managing services effectively and in preparing managers for their complex and multi-faceted role. Therefore, this research study illustrates how ideology sees Early Childhood Care and Education policy and legislation seamlessly implemented by managers of early years services, while the reality on the ground in terms of translating the policy into practice is much more complex and difficult. The purpose of this research is therefore to:

- Deconstruct the role of the manager and uncover the lived experiences of Ireland's ECCE policy context in terms of legislative requirements and governance and management responsibilities at a practice level.

- Question the extent to which managers of ECCE services are prepared for these roles and responsibilities in the current legislative and practice context of the ECCE sector.
- Explore various perspectives on what constitutes quality management and governance in practice.
- Explore various perspectives regarding how best to prepare managers of ECCE services for their complex and multi-faceted role.
- Identify supports, if any, available to and required by managers to enable them to effectively govern and manage their ECCE service.

What are the benefits of this research?

There is a current scarcity of research conducted in relation to governance and management, what is involved in the practice of governance and management and its contribution to enhancing quality Early Childhood Care and Education provision. Therefore, in conducting this research, I hope to add to the limited research and create new findings in this area. It is hoped that this research will:

- Enhance our understanding of how to better prepare managers for their roles and responsibilities within early years services.
- Create greater knowledge around supports that managers require within practice in order to appropriately govern and manage their service.
- Gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of compliance with statutory governance and management requirements, and how this enhances quality provision.

Exactly what is involved for the participant?

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in this research study. Participation will involve your presence in a 30-minute (approx.) face-to-face interview in January 2020. I will phone you before hand to organise a mutually suited time and place for meeting.

Right to withdraw

Involvement in this research is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without specifying a reason and without consequence.

How will the information be used?

Information obtained from interviews will be combined with other participant interviews, forming the 'Findings and Analysis' chapter within my research thesis.

How will confidentiality be kept?

All information will be confidential and will only be used for the purpose of this research. Your anonymity and the anonymity of your service/organisation will be preserved at all times. ID codes will be created to ensure you and your service/organisation cannot be identified by anyone else except me.

What will happen to the data after research has been completed?

In line with Mary Immaculate College's Data Retention Policy, data will be kept for the duration of the study, and a period of 3 years after the research has been completed. Interview recordings are deleted immediately after they have been transcribed.

Contact details

If you would like to be involved in this research, please complete and return the informed consent form attached with this information sheet by the 20th January 2020 in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope.

If you have any queries or issues regarding this study, or require clarification on any matter, please be sure to contact me at any time. My details are as follows:

Name: Rebecca Knox

Phone: 0851339795

Email: rebeccaknox1994@gmail.com

You may also contact my supervisor Dr Mary Moloney at mary.moloney@mic.ul.ie or by telephone at 061-204316.

Alternatively, if you have concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:

Name: MIREC Administrator, Mary Immaculate College, South Circular Road, Limerick.

Phone: 061-204515

Email: mirec@mic.ul.ie

Yours Sincerely,

Rebecca Knox

Appendix 2

Informed Consent Form



Informed Consent Form

Ideology vs. Reality – An Exploration of the Relationship between Governance, Management and Quality Early Childhood Care and Education Provision

As outlined in the participant information letter, the current study will investigate governance and management and their relationship with quality provision within the Early Childhood Care and Education sector. This information letter should be read carefully before consenting to partake in the research study.

In relation to this research study, I understand that:

- My partaking in this research involves participation in a 30-minute (approx.) face-to-face interview.
- My anonymity is assured through the creation of ID codes which ensure my service/organisation and I cannot be identified by anyone else except the researcher.
- My involvement in this research is voluntary, and I am free to withdraw from the experiment at any time without reason or consequence.
- All information gathered in relation to me will remain confidential and used only for the purposes of this research. It will not be released to any third party.
- In accordance with the MIC Record Retention Schedule, data will be kept for the duration of the study, plus a period of 3 years after the research has been completed. Interview recordings are deleted immediately after they have been transcribed.

I _____ (printed name) agree to participate in research undertaken by Rebecca Knox/

Signed _____

Date _____

Appendix 3

Interview Questions

Managers of Early Years' Service

- How long have you been an Early Childhood manager?
- How did you become involved in managing an Early Childhood Setting?
- What are your key roles and responsibilities as an Early Childhood manager?
- What knowledge do you feel is essential for an Early Childhood manager?
- How do you feel about the focus upon governance and management in the Early Years Services Regulations, 2016?
- Do you think that you are prepared for your changing roles and responsibilities under the Early Years Services Regulations, 2016?
- How do the governance and management requirements in the Early Years Services Regulations 2016 affect the quality of provision in ECEC?
- What has had the most impact on how you govern/manage your setting?
- What type of qualification do you think would be most relevant for an Early Childhood manager?
- In what way do you think a mandatory early years' service management qualification would benefit the sector?
- What supports if any, are available to you to enable you manage your setting effectively?
- What support if any, would you like to be made available to support Early Childhood managers?
- Further Comments?

CCC and MO Representatives

- What are the key roles and responsibilities of an Early Childhood manager?
- What knowledge do you feel is essential for an Early Childhood manager?
- What do you think has the most impact upon how an Early childhood manager manages an early childhood setting?
- How do you feel about the focus upon governance and management in the Early Years Services Regulations, 2016?
- How do the governance and management requirements in the Early Years Services Regulations 2016 affect the quality of provision in ECEC?
- Do you think that managers of early years services are prepared for their changing roles and responsibilities under the Early Years Services Regulations, 2016?
- What type of qualification do you think would be most relevant for an Early Childhood manager?
- In what way do you think a mandatory early years' service management qualification would benefit the sector?
- What supports if any, are available to managers to enable them to effectively govern and manage their setting?
- What other support if any, would you like to be made available to support Early Childhood managers?
- Further comments?

Appendix 4

Evidence of Data Analysis

CCC 1

When I think about early years management, it kind of fits into 3 main sections. Well 2 but you can kind of break it down into 3. So the idea that they manage the centre i.e. the overall governance. So if that's reporting to a board of management, they're that kind of middle bit in terms of management, you know financial management, HR management that kind of thing. They also have the role of leading quality and I think that's something that probably can conflict a little bit with management in a way even though it's the one person doing it. So, the leadership is a different kettle of fish I would think, than the actual admin, financial concrete management. And I think because the way the sector is evolving the management bit seems to come to the forefront because that's the bit that you get pulled up on in terms of

- RK Rebecca Knox (Postgrad)
Responsibility: Financial Management
- RK Rebecca Knox (Postgrad)
Responsibility: HR
- RK Rebecca Knox (Postgrad)
Responsibility: Leadership
- RK Rebecca Knox (Postgrad)
Management vs. Leadership
- RK Rebecca Knox (Postgrad)
Policy demands

CCC 2

Well unfortunately, they have to try and keep up to speed with all the changes that have been made, particularly in terms of the funding schemes because its ever changing. So the rules for a particular funding stream this year are going to be slightly different to what they were last year, and the year before. So those rules that they must comply with and that they get inspected on change every year and updated every year. They wouldn't need to be updated if there weren't changes made so that's a very significant thing for them to keep on top of. And then I suppose with the preschool regulations, and significantly now with the introduction of school aged childcare regulations and the requirements for school aged services to be registered, there's a whole different set of standards that need to be adhered to then there. And there's a lot to do with administration and finance and financial management alongside what we would have traditionally expected as one of the main skills that a manager would have to have around delivering a quality childcare service. That's almost an aside now. And it's a given that the managers will have that in terms of their qualifications around delivering a quality childcare service. But to try and marry that with being up to speed and complaint on regulatory requirements and then keeping a business running whether it's a community service or somebody who is self-employed and running their own business, the financial sustainability is a challenge right across the board. It's a huge one.

- Rebecca Knox... Knowledge: Sectoral change
- Rebecca Knox... Funding scheme issues
- Rebecca Knox... Extent of sectoral change
- Rebecca Knox... Funding scheme issues
- Rebecca Knox... Knowledge: regulatory
- Rebecca Knox... Responsibility: administration
- Rebecca Knox... Knowledge: financial
- Rebecca Knox... Expansion of management role:
- Rebecca Knox... Management expectations
- Rebecca Knox... Knowledge: regulatory
- Rebecca Knox... Knowledge: running a business
- Rebecca Knox... Financial stress

MO 2

I suppose at the end of the day, the difference between 2006 and 2016 and the focus on governance is about public money and exchequer funds. There's a lot of schemes being funded. There's 2 free pre school years, the ECCE years. So, you know, once public money is involved, there's always going to be a focus on it and a need for transparency and governance around it. And that just comes with it. If you're going to get money from the government, you have to stand over how you spent it. So again, it has changed the role of the manager in that it has increased the paperwork and the admin burden. It has increased the reporting and TUSLA inspectors have a focus on the governance piece as well. But then you're being inspected by other bodies such as POBAL. Which they wouldn't have had 12 years ago.

- RK Rebecca Knox (Postgrad)
Necessity of regulations
- RK Rebecca Knox (Postgrad)
Responsibility: Financial Accountability
- RK Rebecca Knox (Postgrad)
Expansion in management role
- RK Rebecca Knox (Postgrad)
Administrative burden
- RK Rebecca Knox (Postgrad)
Regulatory compliance
- RK Rebecca Knox (Postgrad)
Multiple actors
- RK Rebecca Knox (Postgrad)
Progressive demands

MANAGER 5

Basically, I think were responsible for everything as going as basic as the building, the grounds, the car park, the heating everything like that the practicalities of running a building. Then you've got the practicalities of running a business and dealing with parents, dealing with children, dealing with staff its very multi-faceted and literally everything from A to Z there's something there to be done by us and that's what we feel is our main role.

MANAGER 6

There are loads but I suppose over the years it has become definitely more of an administrative role. So, its paperwork, finance, staff management you know. Definitely over the years it has become more structured and it has become an administrative role now. In the early says it was definitely more hands on, it didn't have the same rules and regulations and I personally felt I was a lot more hands on with the kids. Whereas now, not that I'm detached from it... but it's running a business, it's trying to keep on top of the admin. The focus has completely changed to – as a manger, it's an admin role. Personally, that's the way I see it. Because it doesn't work otherwise. You have to have somebody now, unless it's a very small setting, you have to have somebody who is looking after the finances because, it is quite unsustainable a lot of the time. Staff...if your short...you know, its constantly making sure your staff are here or you have enough staff. All the forms, the schemes, its paperwork.

MANAGER 7

Well I suppose in terms of the setting in general our main priority is the health and safety of the children. So, to make sure that the materials and environment is safe and appropriate to use and that the children are not in danger of anything. And then I suppose in terms of the children, its important to ensure that they are provided with high quality care and that the environment is inclusive and suits their needs and is age appropriate. And then I suppose I have a responsibility to ensure all rules and regulations are adhered to and to communicate with the government bodies like TUSLA, the inspections and POBAL, the DES and the HSE for the kitchen. So all those have to be done as well to make sure we update the records for the various inspections and to make sure they are all up to date and then they have to be stored. It depends what the records are. Some of them have to be stored for 2 years, and some up to 5 or 6 years. There's loads of admin and you have to be really organised. Even the fire safety you have that as well.

MANAGER 8

There's no real essential knowledge that you need like once you've worked in childcare at all, to be a manager you would find that no problem because you've always dealt with parents, you've done it all. There might be that little bit of extra to do with parents like dealing with money and things like that. But other than that like, there's no other real experience needed like once you've worked in childcare you kind of know the ins and outs of it and that's generally what a manager is doing anyway. It might just be on a higher scale that you're doing invoices and things like that

And how do you find that part of it like the invoices, accounts and fees?

Its not bad but you are chasing parents - some you mightn't even have to send the invoices they just know what they are supposed to be paying but others you would be chasing them and I suppose that part is difficult because it's constant and you never really have a good relationship with them because you're always looking for something.

MANAGER 9

Ehm well I do feel like you know managers need to be how would I explain it... kind of understanding to the parents and to their situations and obviously to the staff. They need to have, I suppose common knowledge. And you need to have experience. I think somebody coming from college and straight into a manager's role wouldn't work because I was in the sector 5 years before I became a manager so you need to have a bit of experience of dealing with parents and different situations that arise in relation to kids whether it be illnesses or developmental issues or anything like that that may pop up like you do need the experience of that

- Rebecca Knox... responsibility: overarching
- Rebecca Knox... Responsibility: Running an ECCP
- Rebecca Knox... Responsibility: Business
- Rebecca Knox... Responsibility: parents
- Rebecca Knox... Responsibility: Children
- Rebecca Knox... Responsibility: staff
- Rebecca Knox... Multiple roles
- Rebecca Knox... Responsibility: Overarching
- Rebecca Knox... Multiple roles
- Rebecca Knox... Progressive demands
- Rebecca Knox... Administrative burden
- Rebecca Knox... Responsibility: administration
- Rebecca Knox... Responsibility: financial
- Rebecca Knox... Responsibility: staff
- Rebecca Knox... Progressive demands
- Rebecca Knox... Responsibility: administration
- Rebecca Knox... Management presence
- Rebecca Knox... Administrative burden
- Rebecca Knox... Responsibility: administration
- Rebecca Knox... Responsibility: Financial
- Rebecca Knox... Financial stress
- Rebecca Knox... Responsibility: staff
- Rebecca Knox... Administrative burden
- Rebecca Knox... Main responsibility: children
- Rebecca Knox... Responsibility: regulatory
- Rebecca Knox... Responsibility: facilitate
- Rebecca Knox... Multiple actors
- Rebecca Knox... Responsibility: regulatory
- Rebecca Knox... Administrative burden
- Rebecca Knox... Knowledge: organisation skills
- Rebecca Knox... Responsibility: Regulatory
- Rebecca Knox... Knowledge: ECCE practice
- Rebecca Knox... Everyday practice
- Rebecca Knox... Responsibility: financial
- Rebecca Knox... Knowledge: none
- Rebecca Knox... Knowledge: ECCE practice
- Rebecca Knox... irrelevant
- Rebecca Knox... Knowledge: intrapersonal skills
- Rebecca Knox... Knowledge: ECCE practice
- Rebecca Knox... Knowledge: ECCE practice
- Rebecca Knox... Pathway to management
- Rebecca Knox... Knowledge: ECCE practice
- Rebecca Knox... Knowledge: ECCE practice

Appendix 5

Definitions of Terms

Early Childcare Supplement (ECS)

In 2006, a once off universal yearly payment of €1000 for each child under the age of 6 was provided on the basis of parents utilizing the funds to ease the cost of childcare in the form of the ECS (Barry and Sherlock 2008; The Irish Examiner 2009). This short-lived funding initiative was soon to be scrapped and replaced with a government subsidised year of free preschool called the Free Pre-School Year in the Early Childhood Care and Education programme in 2010 (Hayes 2010).

Programme Support Payment (PSP)

A payment provided to services to aid them in completing administrative work that goes hand in hand with the implementation of DCYA funded schemes (DCYA 2020). It has been stated that this payment enables providers to have a better partnership with parents by informing them of how they benefit from the State supported schemes, and also to prepare materials and resources required for children's learning activities (DCYA 2020). This payment equates to 7 days of the services registrations for ECCE at Standard Capitation rate, and 14 days of registrations for CCS(P) and TEC (DCYA 2020).

Transitional Support Payment (TSP)

A payment provided to services who enter into new NCS contracts with the DCYA in order to aid with the familiarisation of the NCS and ensure they meet and comply with funding rules. Its purpose is to support ECCE services with the administrative requirements that come hand in hand with transitioning to a new funding scheme, as well as the other current requirements of DCYA funding programmes (POBAL 2019d)

TUSLA's Quality and Regulatory Framework (QRF)

The QRF was developed by TUSLA's Early Years Inspectorate in order to support ECCE services in complying with the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 (TUSLA 2018a). It illustrates the Inspectorate's interpretation of the regulations, and outlines how they assess services for compliance with these regulations (TUSLA 2018a, Moloney 2019). It sets out core compliance requirements for ECCE service managers in order to create a high-quality service which promotes children's health and safety. This document is underscored by evidenced based national and international best practice

Better Start Quality Development Service

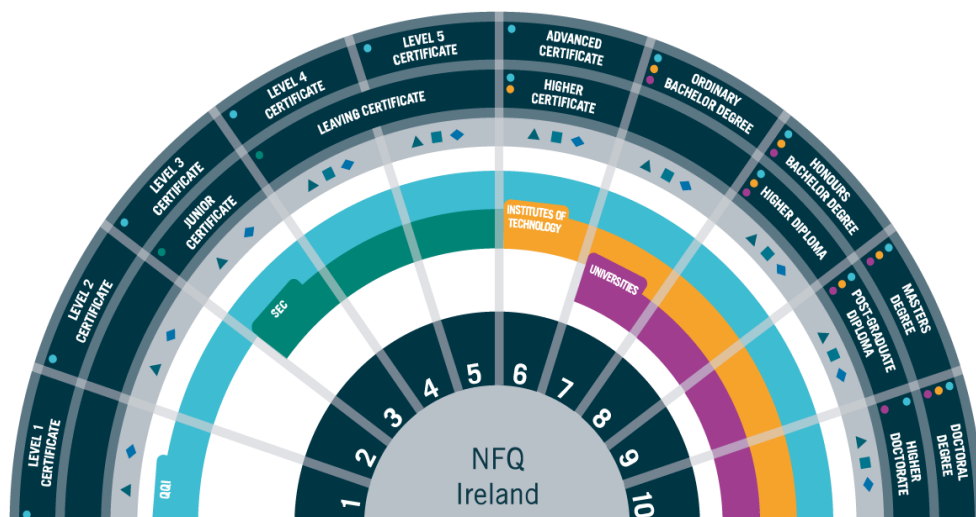
A national initiative funded by the DCYA to support and drive quality improvement. It provides a highly skilled and experienced Early Years Specialist team to work directly in a mentoring capacity with early years services. It is an 'on site' mentoring service which supports providers in implementing the quality standards of Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Aistear, The National Early Years Curriculum Framework. Early Years Specialists will work in early childhood settings (full day care or preschools) with managers and staff to develop and implement quality development goals and actions based on the Síolta and Aistear frameworks. Services will devise plans to suit their particular needs and interests and the Early Years Specialist will mentor staff in implementing their plans over an agreed time period. Early Years Specialists are qualified (Level 8/9) early childhood professionals with a wealth of practice experience and a thorough grounding in evidence based best practice, mentoring and facilitation. Early Years Specialist visit your service and discuss what aspects of practice you would like to work on and further develop a quality development plan. The Early Years Specialist will work with you and your staff to make a joint assessment of your service using the Aistear and Síolta Practice Guide quality standards. From this you can agree specific quality development goals and realistic action plans, relevant to your service (POBAL 2019b)

National Síolta Aistear Initiative

Established in 2016, the National Síolta Aistear Initiative is a national training programme that supports the coordinated rollout of Síolta, The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum. It is funded by the DCYA and is being developed in collaboration with the DES, the NCCA and Better Start. A number of Síolta Aistear Mentors provide a range of training and mentoring supports to Early Years Settings which support them in implementing Síolta and Aistear in their settings. The NCCA have developed 10 hours of workshops to support early years practitioners understand and use the Aistear Síolta Practice Guide.

Appendix 6

National Framework of Qualifications and Quality and Qualifications Ireland



National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)

The NFQ is a system used to describe the qualification levels in Ireland. It allows for the comparison of different levels of qualifications, including qualifications obtained in school, further education, and higher education. It is divided into 10 levels (1-10) which describes the standard of learning achievements from the most initial stages of education right up to the most advanced. It describes what each person is expected to know, understand and do upon the completion of a qualification, and provides a pathway of the progression from one level to the next.

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

An independent state agency under the auspices of the DES that is responsible for promoting, maintaining, and developing the National Framework of Qualifications, along with the promotion of quality and accountability in education services in Ireland. QQI is an awarding body which creates, approves, and regulates further and higher education programmes provided within schools, colleges, and higher education institutes. A person who completes a course at any of the 10 levels of the NFQ receive a QQI Award. QQI replaces FETAC and HETAC who's awarding bodies no longer exist.

Source: www.nfq.ie, www.qqi.ie, Quality and Qualifications Ireland 2017

Appendix 7

Early Years Education Focused Inspections (EYEI)

Quality Framework for Early-years Education Inspections in Early Years Settings Participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme

Area	Outcome
Area 1 - Quality of context to support children's learning and development	1. The atmosphere and organisation of the setting nurture children's learning and development and support the inclusion of all children
	2. Relationships are warm, responsive, respectful and reciprocal
	3. Children's sense of identity and belonging is nurtured
Area 2 - Quality of processes to support children's learning and development	4. Provision is informed by <i>Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework</i>
	5. Information about the children's development informs next steps in learning
	6. High quality interactions with children are facilitated
	7. The environment and resources support children's learning and development
	8. Play is central to children's learning and development
	9. Emergent language, literacy and numeracy skills are fostered
	10. Provision for children's learning and development is closely aligned to their interests and developing capabilities
	11. Children learn in an inclusive environment
Area 3 - Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements	12. Children demonstrate engagement and enjoyment in their learning and a positive sense of well-being
	13. Children experience achievement and are developing through their learning experiences
	14. Children are developing a sense of identity and belonging and personal and social skills to support their learning and development
	15. Children communicate their experiences, thoughts, ideas and feelings with others in a variety of ways
	16. Children make sense of their world by interacting with others and the environment through playing, investigating and questioning
Area 4 - Quality of management and leadership for learning	17. Planning, review and evaluation are informed by <i>Siolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education</i>
	18. Management in the setting provides for a high quality learning and development experience for children
	19. Clear two-way channels of communication are fostered between the early years setting, parents, families and children
	20. Transitions into, from and within the setting are managed effectively to support children's learning and development

Source: DES 2018a

EYEI Quality Continuum

Excellent	Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of children.
Very Good	Provision that is very good is highly effective in meeting the needs of children.
Good	Provision that is good is effective in meeting the needs of children but with some aspects to be developed.
Fair	Provision that is fair requires practice to be improved to meet the needs of children.
Poor	Provision that is poor is inadequate and requires significant improvement to meet the needs of children.

Source: DES 2018a

Governance in Practice under EYEI Framework (DES 2018a)

The Quality of Management and Leadership for Learning	
Outcome 17: Planning, review and evaluation are informed by Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education	
1	Regular reflection on policies, procedures and statements
2	Professionalism, teamwork, collaboration and partnership surrounds all aspects of management
3	Ensure staff receive mentoring and other external supports if available
Outcome 18: Management within the setting provides for a high-quality learning and development experience for children	
1	Ensure clarity around the roles and responsibilities of staff in terms of educational activity provision
2	Ensure the effective use of staff skill sets
3	Lead by example and be a role model for other staff by promoting high quality standards and expressing clear direction within the service
4	Provide regular opportunities for the support and supervision of staff
Outcome 19: Clear two-way channels of communication are fostered between the early years setting, parents, families and children	
1	Ensure parents are made aware of policies, procedures and curriculum in operation within the service
Outcome 20: Clear two-way channels of communication are fostered between the early years setting, parents, families and children	
1	Ensure policies are developed around the transition of children within services and between different educational settings
2	Promote the sharing of information with primary schools in order to support continuity and progression in their learning

Source: DES 2018a

Appendix 8

Comparison of Notification and Registration Requirements from 1996 and 2013

<u>Comparison of information and documentation required for Notification and Registration from 1996 and 2013</u>	
Information and Documentation required for Notification under the Childcare (Preschool Services Regulations 1996)	Information and Documentation required for Registration under the CFA Act 2013
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal details of the individual proposing to carry on a preschool service • Personal details of the individual responsible for operating the preschool service (if different) • Qualifications and / or experience of the individual carrying on a preschool service • Type of facility they wish to carry on i.e. full time, sessional, child minding, drop-in. • State if the pre-school service is provided by an organisation such as voluntary group, company or other body. • In the case of a registered company, the registered office and the name of the Company Secretary should also be given. • Statement of the number of children being catered for • Statement of the number of staff employed in the service. • A description of the facilities i.e. if the service is domestic or otherwise • Written confirmation from a chartered engineer or a properly and suitably qualified architect with experience in fire safety design and management that the relevant statutory requirements relating to fire safety have been complied with. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garda vetting/Police vetting for proposed registered provider and person in charge (if different). • Two references in respect of the proposed registered provider, and in respect of the person in charge (if different). In the case of sole providers and child minders vetting for the second or emergency person. • Floor plan of the interior design of the centre giving details of the dimensions of all rooms intended for children’s use, also indicating owner’s/staff rooms. • Plan of any outdoor area available for children’s use. • Evidence of registration from Companies Registration Office, where applicable. • Proof of identity of the proposed registered provider (copy of passport or driving licence are the only acceptable documents). • Copy of the Certificate of Insurance or written confirmation of insurance cover • Copy of Statement of Purpose and Function • Copy of Safety Statement • Copy of Policy on Managing Behaviour • Copy of Complaints Policy • Copy of Policy on Administration of Medication • Copy of Policy on Infection Control • Copy of Policy on Safe Sleep • Copy of planning permission for service • Copy of Fire Safety Certification Documentation (if available) • Details of Board of Management if applicable (Name, Role and Function) • Vetting for Members of Boards who have access to children (Certificate(s) of Disclosure)

Source: DoH 1996, Early Childhood Ireland 2019*b*

Appendix 9

Governance in practice under the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016

Regulations under “The Extent to Which the Service is Well Governed” (TUSLA 2018a, p.1)

9	Management and Recruitment
10	Policies, Procedures and Statements of Pre-school Service
11	Staffing Levels
14	Review of a Pre-school Service
15	Record of a Pre-school Child
16	Record in Relation to a Pre-school Service
17	Information for parents
31	Notification of Incidents
32	Complaints

Source: TUSLA 2018a, p.1

Governance in Practice within the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services Regulations) 2016	
1	A clear system of authority and accountability must be in place outlining the relevant roles and responsibilities of each staff member, and providers must have a well-established administrative process.
2	Ensure the appointment of a person in charge, a deputy person in charge who are on the premises during the operation of the service
3	Ensure the suitability of each adult working directly with children by means of a vetting disclosure and attainment of references.
4	Ensure each person working directly with children are competent in performing their roles by means of a minimum Level 5 QQI qualification in ECCE.
5	Appropriate supervision of staff in which induction training must be provided to all employees in order to ensure clear communication and implementation of policies and procedures.
6	Ensure consistency in the communication of each staff members roles and responsibilities, including that of person(s) in charge and their responsibilities in administration.

7	Ensure staff recruitment pertains to employment and equality legislation, including research-based human resource practices upon recruitment of staff.
8	Setting up a communication system in which time is set aside for one-to-one staff meetings in order for management to relay important information regarding the service to staff members, and vice versa.
9	Ensure the development, distribution and reviewing of the 21 policies, procedures and statements, and ensure all staff and parents have a clear understanding of their contents.
10	Ensure there is an appropriate number of staff supervising and meeting the needs of the children in the service in line with the ratio's provided in regulations, and ensuring ratios are maintained during staff absences.
11	Ensure staff absences are dealt with in terms of the contacting of relief staff to cover ratios, and establishment of procedures for staff in relation to informing the service of both their absence from and return to work.
12	Carry out a review of the service, its policies and procedures and make changes if necessary
13	Ensure appropriate development, management, organisation, availability, confidentiality and retention of the records outlined within regulations
14	Ensure children's safety, health, development and welfare while in attendance of the service
15	Ensure the notification of incidents leading to unplanned closures and incidents regarding children and staff to the appropriate body i.e. parents, Health and Safety Authority, An Garda Síochána, TUSLA Social Worker, Early Years Inspectorate, and enforce preventative measures to prevent reoccurrence
16	Be open, honest and responsive in relation to complaints received regarding the service, investigate and report complaints received and enforce a complaints management system that is consistent, fair, transparent and impartial.

Source: TUSLA 2018a, TUSLA 2018b, Gov. of Ireland 2016

Appendix 10

Funding Scheme Compliance

ECCE Scheme Contractual Arrangements	
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with parents in order to make agreements regarding the manner of childcare provided to them. • Knowledgeable of children’s birth dates in correspondence with their ECCE eligibility i.e. children born the 1st January 2017 - 31st December 2017 are eligible for the scheme in September 2020 and September 2021 – they must be between 2 years and 8 months and not older than 5 years and 6 months • Ability to use PIP – Programme Implementation Portal, an online platform where children are registered for the scheme • Registration of children on PIP – Providers must obtain children’s date of birth and PPS number • PIP Parent Declaration form and PIP Information sheet must be signed by all parents to ensure they understand the terms of the programme • Compliance with the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 • Stringent record keeping within a compliance file containing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Attendance register of children – daily arrival and departure times ○ Enrolment details ○ Parental letters ○ Fee records ○ Staff qualifications ○ Higher capitation forms • Room leader has a QQI Level 6 Qualification • Room Assistant Must hold QQI Level 5 • Payment of higher capitation requires 3 years payed ECCE experience along with a degree at QQI Level 7 or higher • Facilitation of compliance visits by POBAL
Financial Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of childcare service fees, opening hours and service calendar which are clearly displayed and accessible to parents • The provider will not charge parents for provision of the ECCE Scheme • Separately account for public funds in income records • Maintenance of appropriate financial accounts for each annual year in line with the CRO and Revenue, and provided to POBAL on request • All Public money must be accounted for and used for its intended purpose • Income and expenditure records are up to date for verification purposes
Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers must record each child’s daily attendance in the service using the standard template set out as part of the contract and recorded either manually or electronically. • Records must include the child’s name, the date of attendance, the time of arrival and the time of departure • Provider must contact parent during a period of absenteeism to establish the cause of the child not attending the Scheme hours. • After a period of 4 weeks of non-attendance without reason, registration will cease, and funding will not be provided for that child. • If a change in patters of attendance has occurred, registration of attendance must be updated on PIP to reflect actual hours of attendance • If a child does not attend within four weeks of the start date, the registration must be cancelled immediately, and any payment received for that child will be returned to POBAL

Source: POBAL 2018, DES 2019

National Childcare Scheme Contractual Arrangements

General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The contract is for a 12-month period and is renewable. • Establishment of the service and the “Primary Authorised User” on the NCS online platform – The Early years Platform • The provider applies for entry onto the NCS by applying for a ‘Programme Call’. In completing the application, the provider’s Tusla registration is checked, and they enter their fees list and service calendar. The contract is then made available to the provider for electronic signature. • The provider must collaborate with parents in order to make agreements regarding the manner of childcare provided to them. • The provider must obtain the child’s full name, CHICK (Childcare Identifier Code Key) and date of birth in order for the child to be registered for a subsidy under the Scheme. • The provider enters the total number of hours of childcare each week for which a subsidy is sought, along with the date on which the childcare arrangement is due to end
Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of childcare service fees, opening hours and service calendar using a standard template and in the format required by POBAL, the Scheme Administrator. • All of the above documents must be published in an area of the service accessible to parents, on PIP, as well as on any website maintained by the provider. • The NCS will publish this fees list online. • The provider will not charge the NCS applicants any sum in excess of the difference between the providers fee and the subsidy payable by the NCS. The difference between the providers fee and applicant’s subsidy is called the “parental co-payment”.
Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provider must retain adequate records to satisfy POBAL in relation to the parental co-payment. • Providers must record each child’s daily attendance in the service using the standard template set out as part of the contract, and recorded either manually or electronically. • Records must include the child’s name, the date of attendance, the time of arrival and the time of departure • Providers must submit a reporting return in respect of attendance on the Early Years Hive by a certain time each week in respect of the previous week. • Failure to submit this return will result in subsidy payments being suspended.
Declarations and Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers must complete an annual financial declaration stating that they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ have submitted their annual accounts in line with Companies Registration Office and Revenue deadlines. ○ have clearly disclosed all NCS funding within the annual accounts as a discrete line item ○ will make the accounts available to the Scheme Administrator on demand and when required. ○ have offset subsidies against the agreed provider fees ○ have a valid tax clearance certificate ○ will facilitate authorised compliance visits by officers appointed by the scheme administrator to inspect compliance with the NCS

Source: DCYA 2019d; 2019e

Appendix 11

Competent Systems

Individual Competence – ECCE Manager/Practitioner		
Knowledge (Knowing)	Practices (Being)	Values (Doing)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of various developmental aspects of children from a holistic perspective (cognitive, social, emotional, creative...) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building strong pedagogical relationships with children, based on sensitive responsivity • Observing children in order to identify their developmental needs • Planning and implementing a wide range of educational projects that respond to children’s needs supporting their holistic development • Documenting children’s progress systematically in order to constantly redefine educational practices • Identifying children with special educational needs and elaborating strategies for their inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking into account children’s needs in order to promote their full potential and their participation in the life of ECCE institutions • Adopting a holistic vision of education that encompasses learning, care and upbringing • Committing to inclusive educational approaches

Institutional Competences – ECCE Setting		
Knowledge (Knowing)	Practices (Being)	Values (Doing)
<p><i>ECCE Institutions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedagogical knowledge with a focus on early childhood and diversity • Knowledge of school leadership (collaborative management styles and distributed leadership) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange paid time for all staff to plan, document and review educational work collectively • Adopting systematic procedures for documenting educational practices and for evaluating the outcomes of pedagogical choices on children’s and families’ experiences • Providing opportunities for joint work (inter-vision and supervision) • Offering ongoing pedagogical guidance to all staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of professional development as a continuous learning process that encompasses personal and professional growth • Conceiving professional learning as a recursive interaction of practising and theorising that needs to be supported coherently across the different stages of a professional career
<p><i>Training Institutes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedagogical knowledge with a focus on early childhood and diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing programmes that are based on a well-balanced combination of theory (academic research) and practice (practical experiences in ECCE settings) • Providing programmes aimed at developing cultural awareness and expression (e.g. activity & culture subjects) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceiving professionalisation as a process that encompasses social and cultural promotion to enhance Lifelong Learning and social inclusion

Inter-institutional and inter-agency competences – Multiple ECCE Setting Collaboration		
Knowledge (Knowing)	Practices (Being)	Values (Doing)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of inter-agency cooperation • Knowledge of community development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting networking between ECCE institutions of the same district • Structuring cross-sectoral approaches to care and education services (health care, child protection, social services) • Outreaching towards families living in difficult conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democracy and respect for diversity • Assuming a partnership approach to the education and care of young children in order to foster social cohesion

Competence within Levels of Governance – Cross-sectoral Collaboration between various Policy Sectors		
Knowledge (Knowing)	Practices (Being)	Values (Doing)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of the situation of ECCE in local, regional, national and international contexts • Knowledge of children’s and families’ rights • Knowledge of diversity in all its forms and anti-discriminatory practices • Knowledge of comprehensive strategies for tackling poverty and socio-cultural inequalities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequately resourcing ECCE in order to provide generalised equitable access to high-quality ECCE in particular for children with a socioeconomically disadvantaged background or with special educational needs • Adopting an integrated approach to ECCE services at local, regional and national level • Co-constructing with all stakeholders a coherent pedagogical framework that ensures coordination between: - ECCE curriculum - Qualification framework for professional preparation of ECCE staff - Quality, monitoring and evaluation framework - Governance framework addressing administrative responsibilities (at local, regional and national level) • Ensuring cross-sectoral collaboration between different policy sectors (education, culture, social affairs, employment, health and justice) • Supporting professionalisation of ECCE staff through: - policies that address coherently initial preparation, induction and continuous professional development of all staff (practitioners, assistants, centre leaders) - investments in various forms of pedagogical guidance - policies promoting career mobility of low-qualified staff through flexible qualification pathways - enhancing the prestige of the profession by ensuring favourable working conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s right to active participation in society • Children’s right to develop their full potential through education and successful learning • Respect and inclusion of diversity • Education as a public good • Democracy, social inclusion and economic development

Source: Urban et al. 2011

Appendix 12

Luxembourg System of ECCE

Luxembourg:

Luxembourg's education framework is divided into two curricular areas; the *Bildungsrahmenplan für non-formale Bildung im Kindes und Jugendalter* (non-formal childcare and education for children 0-12) and the *Plan d'études de l'école fondamentale* (formal education including formal early education programmes and compulsory preschool education for children 3-12) (OECD 2015).

In terms of monitoring quality standards and registration of ECCE services, in Luxembourg's Ministry for Education, Children and Youth take sole responsibility while TUSLA, under the DCYA, inspect and monitor standards in Ireland and place an onus on the provider to register their service with TUSLA (OECD 2015).

Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth	
Non-Formal Education	Formal Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Public and Private provision for children under 4 ➤ Afterschool/Out of School hours provision for children 4 – 12 ➤ Home-based setting provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Non-Compulsory Education → <i>éducation précoce</i> for children aged 3 ➤ Compulsory education → <i>éducation préscolaire</i> for children from 4 to 6 (first 2 years of primary school)
<p>State has a guarantee responsibility → Granting of operating licenses by the State → Service agreements with private providers</p>	<p>State has an implementation responsibility</p>
<p>Legislative requirements for provision set out in the SEA Regulation External evaluations carried out by National Youth Service – affiliated with the Ministry of Education</p>	<p>Legislative requirements in The Education Act 2009 Quality Agency evaluate primary schools performance</p>
<p>Usually open 46 weeks per year, from 7:00am to 7:00pm</p>	<p>Usually open for 36 weeks per year Non-compulsory Early education programmes (<i>éducation précoce</i>) and Compulsory education (<i>éducation préscolaire</i>) open 36 weeks of the year offering 26 hours of educational activities per year Closed during school holidays when children may attend non-formal education settings</p>
<p>Settings operated by communes or private (for profit/non-profit) providers Non-profit providers that enter into contractual agreements with the state receive public funding</p>	<p>Settings part of the formal school system</p>
<p>75%-100% of running costs subsidised by the state. Private providers decide on their fees</p>	<p>The Formal education (<i>éducation précoce</i>) fees are free for parents</p>
<p>Core practitioner in non-formal education required to have a 3-year university Bachelor Degree</p>	<p>Core practitioner in formal education required to have 4-year university Bachelor degree</p>
<p>Curriculum – National framework plan for the non-formal education of children and youth which includes general goals and basic educational principles</p>	<p>Curricular framework for the four cycles in primary education – <i>Plan d'études pour les quatre cycles de l'enseignement fondamental</i></p>

Source: Honig and Bock 2017; Schreyer and Oberhuemer 2017

Appendix 13

Comparison of Regulations from 1996 and 2006

Regulations associated with adult child ratios from 1996 and 2006

<i>Regulation 7 – Adult/Child Ratios (1996)</i>			<i>Regulation 8 – Management and Staffing (2006)</i>				
Full Time	Sessional	Drop-in	Full Time	Part Time	Sessional	Drop-in	Overnight
0-1 = 1:3	0-6 = 1:10	Under 12 months =	0-1 = 1:3	0-1 = 1:3	0-1 = 1:3	0-6 = 1:4	0-1 = 1:3
1-3 = 1:5		0:3	1-2 = 1:5	1-2 = 1:5	1-2 ^{1/2} = 1:5		1-6 = 1:5
3-6 = 1:8		1-6 = 1:8	2-3 = 1:6	2-3 = 1:6	2 ^{1/2} -6 = 1:10		
			3-6 = 1:8	3-6 = 1:8			

Regulations associated with Garda Vetting from 1996 and 2006

<i>(none) (1996)</i>	<i>Regulation 8 – Management and Staffing (2006)</i>
(none)	<p>A person carrying on a pre-school service shall ensure appropriate vetting of all staff, students and volunteers who have access to a child –</p> <p>(a) by reference to past employer references in particular the most recent employer reference, in respect of all staff, and</p> <p>(b) by reference to references from reputable sources, in respect of all students and volunteers, and</p> <p>(c) by acquiring Garda vetting from An Garda Síochána when An Garda Síochána have set down procedures to make such vetting available, and</p> <p>(d) in circumstances where Garda vetting is not available for staff, students and volunteers who have lived outside the jurisdiction, by ensuring that these persons provide the necessary police vetting from other police authorities.</p> <p>(3) Such vetting procedures shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed or assigned or being allowed access to a child in the pre-school service.</p>

Regulations associated with the Development of the Child from 1996 and 2006

<i>Regulation 4 - Development of the Child (1996)</i>	<i>Regulation 5 - Health, Welfare and Development of the Child (2006)</i>
<p>“A person carrying on a pre-school service shall ensure that every preschool child attending the service has suitable means of expression and development through the use of books, toys, games and other play materials, having regard to his or her age and development.” (DHC 1996, p.11)</p>	<p>“Each child’s learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the service through the provision of the appropriate opportunities, experiences, activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child and the child’s cultural context.” (DHC 2006, p.6)</p>

Source: DoH 1996, DHC 2006

Appendix 14

Comparison of regulations associated with children's Health, Welfare and Development of the Child from 2006 and 2016

Regulation 5 - <i>Health, Welfare and Development of the Child (2006)</i>	Regulation 19 - <i>Health, Welfare and Development of the Child (2016)</i>
<p>“Each child’s learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the service through the provision of the appropriate opportunities, experiences, activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child and the child’s cultural context.” (DHC 2006, p.6)</p>	<p>“(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that—</p> <p>(a) each child’s learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and</p> <p>(b) Appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.</p> <p>(2) A registered provider shall ensure that no corporal punishment is inflicted on a pre-school child whilst attending the service.</p> <p>(3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service.</p> <p>(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a pre-school child shall not be—</p> <p>(a) permitted access to the internet,</p> <p>(b) photographed, or</p> <p>(c) recorded, while attending the pre-school service other than in accordance with the terms of the consent of a parent or guardian given in the form specified in the service’s policy on the use of the internet and photographic and recording devices” (Gov. of Ireland 2016, p. 18)</p>

Source: Knox 2017

An amendment and extension of *Regulation 4: Development of the Child to Regulation 5: Health, Welfare and Development of the Child* placed a responsibility on managers to ensure children’s learning and development was appropriately facilitated within the service (DoH 1996; DHC 2006). In relaying the aforementioned point of how the 1996 regulations did not go far enough, Moloney and Pope (2013) note that in order for Regulation 5 to be effectively implemented, professional qualifications and an educated workforce were required. However, much the same as the 1996 regulations, managers were merely required to ensure that “suitable and competent adults are working directly with the children in the pre-school setting at all times” (DHC 2006, p.37). In addition to this, managers were recommended to have a workforce comprising of at least 50% of staff qualified in an area relevant to the care and development of young children.

The table above signifies the extent to which Regulation 5 - Health, Welfare and Development of the Child was extended upon in the EYS Regulations 2016, and how the new Regulation 19 provides for children’s educational and developmental needs. Knox’s research on policy that safeguards children in ECCE services (2017) declares that Regulation 5 within the Childcare (Preschool Services) Regulations 2006 required appropriate qualifications and a competent workforce in order to effectively and appropriately facilitate children’s learning and development and subsequently, comply with legislation. Regulation 5 made considerable demands of staff working directly with children, all the while being located within a largely uneducated and unprofessional sector.

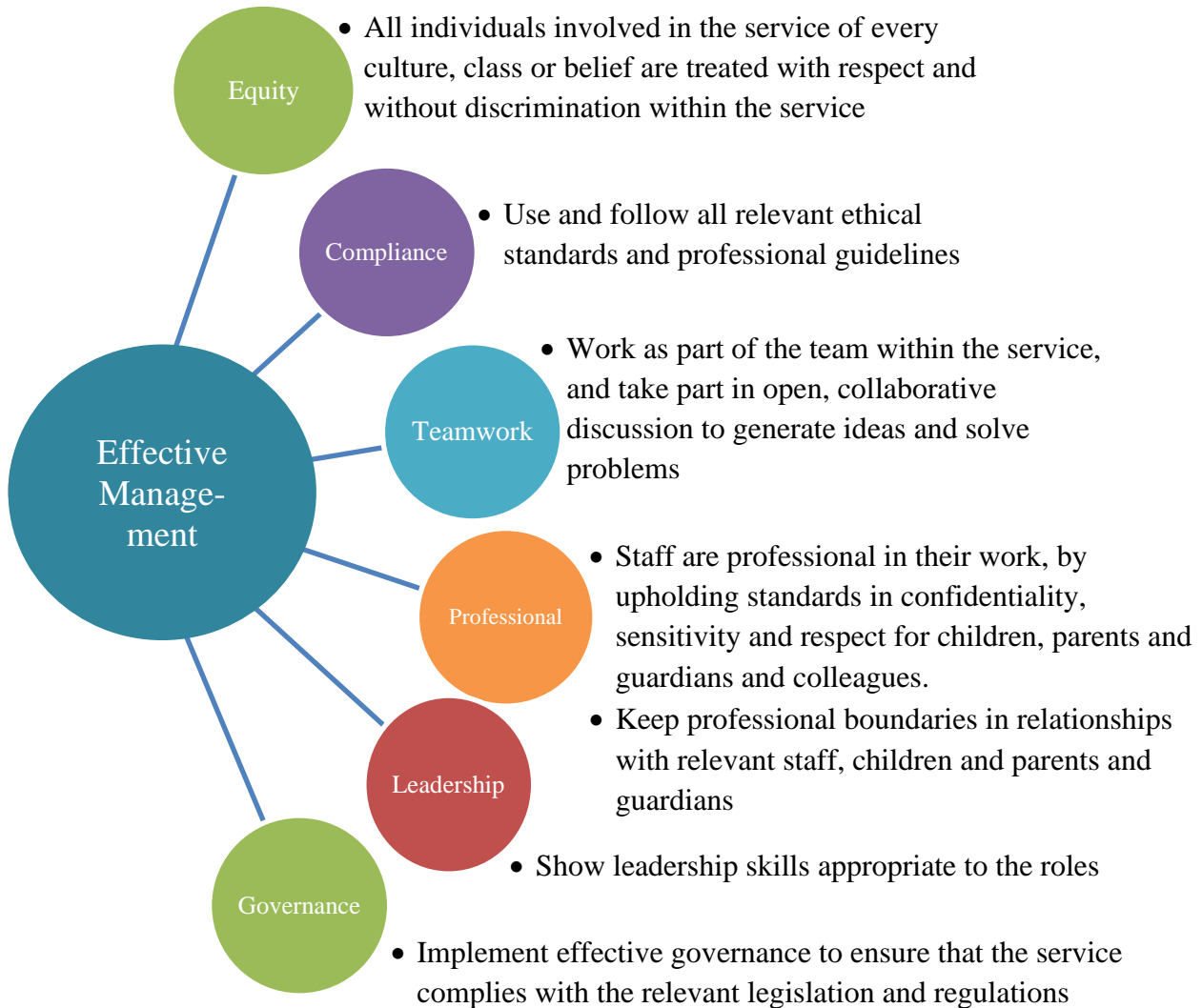
Appendix 15

Development of Managerial Roles and Governance Responsibilities in line With Regulatory and Legislative Development

	Administration	Financial Accountability	Curriculum Oversight	Physical Resource Management	Human Resource Management	Performance Management	Working in Collaboration with Parents	Decision Making
Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme 2010	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
National Childcare Scheme 2019	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Appendix 16

Staff behaviours achieved through “effective management”



Source: TUSLA 2018a

APPENDIX 17

Legislative Requirements under Australia's National Quality Framework

Area 1 - EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND PRACTICE

- Approved Learning Frameworks
- Information to be Kept and Available
- Documentation

Area 2 - CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Adequate Supervision
- Harm and Hazards
- Health, Hygiene and Safe Food Practices
- Child Protection
- Incidents, Injury, Trauma and Illness
- Infectious Diseases
- First Aid Kits
- Medical Conditions Policy
- Administration of Medication
- Emergencies and Communication
- Telephone or Other Communication Equipment
- Collection of Children from Premises
- Excursions

Area 3 - PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Harm And Hazards
- Outdoor Space Requirements
 - Swimming Pools And Other Water Hazards
 - Fencing
 - Natural Environment
 - Shade
- Indoor Space Requirements
 - Ventilation And Natural Light
 - Glass
 - Administrative Space
 - Toilet And Hygiene Facilities
 - Nappy Changing Facilities
 - Laundry And Hygiene Facilities
 - Premises, Furniture, Materials And Equipment

Area 4 - STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS

- Responsible Person
- Educator Qualifications
- Centre-based and Family Care
- Educator to Child Ratio's

Area 5 - RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN

- Inappropriate Discipline
- Interactions with Children
- Relationships in Groups

Area 6 - COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

- Access for Parents

Area 7 - GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

- Policies and Procedures
- Information to be Displayed
- Reporting Information to the Regulatory Authority
- Management of Records
- Confidentiality and Storage of Records

Source: ACECQA 2012

APPENDIX 18

Literature Input Table

Who - Author	Where - Bibliographic reference	What - What is the article about	Why - Why do you find it interesting
Diane Preston 2013	Preston, D. (2013), Being a manager in an English nursery, <i>European Early Childhood Education Research Journal</i> , Volume 21 Issue 3, pp. 326– 338	<p style="text-align: center;">WHAT IT IS LIKE TO BE A MANAGER IN CONTEXT OF AN EARLY YEARS SERVICE</p> <p>29 managers and deputy managers in private 15 nurseries in England.</p> <p>Many individuals appointed into the role of a manager did not have the training to support them.</p> <p>Relationship with children is more distant with increased professionalisation and promotion to management, move away from caring role.</p> <p>Traditional images of the childcare sector and childcare workforce profile mitigates the introduction of managerialism.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">→Taking on a professional management role is difficult in an undervalued sector seen as unprofessional.</p> <p>Increased demand for childcare and increased inclusion of parents within the workforce, added with increased government funding and surveillance of that funding emphasises the need for adequately trained workforce to cope with multi-faceted role of a manager.</p> <p>There is a responsibility for making a profit as well as satisfying many different stakeholders along the way.</p>	<p>Pinpoints many aspects of the research study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Outlines that managers are not adequately equipped to carry out their role as a manager. ➤ Direct link to the effects that a lack of training has on management of the EYS. ➤ Outlines lack of support network for managers
<p>Useful Literature from Bibliography:</p> <p>Smith, A. and Langston, A. 1999. <i>Managing Staff in Early Years Settings</i>, Routledge.</p> <p>Vincent, C. and Braun, A. 2010. 'And hairdressers are quite seedy..': the moral worth of childcare training <i>Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood</i>, 11, no.2:203-214.</p> <p>Rodd, J. 1999. An investigation of the philosophical bases of practice of child care staff, early childhood teachers and managers in the southwest of England, <i>Early Child Development and Care</i>, 158:21-29</p> <p>Parker, M. 2004. Becoming Manager or The Werewolf looks in the Mirror Checking for Unusual Facial Hair? <i>Management Learning</i>, 35, no1:45-59.</p> <p>Osgood, J. 2006. Deconstructing professionalism in early childhood education: Resisting the regulatory gaze. <i>Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood</i> 7, no 1:5-14</p> <p>Miller, L. 2008. Developing professionalism within a regulatory framework in England: challenges and possibilities <i>European Early Childhood Education Research Journal</i>, 16, no 2: 255 – 268</p> <p>Goodliff, G. 2007. Achieving Early Years Professional (EYP) status: New EYPs evaluate the process and its impact on professional identity. Paper presented at 17th EECERA Conference Prague, Czech Republic</p>			