RESOLUTION ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION


Believes that:

1. Children have a right, as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to receive education, and early childhood must be considered part of this right.
2. Early childhood education is of great value to all children and should be available to all. It provides a sound basis for learning and helps to develop skills, knowledge, personal competence and confidence and a sense of social responsibility.

Notes that:

3. Educational research shows that early childhood education is an important factor in the promotion of equal opportunities, reduces the need for expensive intervention, and leads to a more successful education in later years;
4. Public investment in early childhood education is cost-effective, generating both human and economic rewards;
5. Physiological, psychological and educational research confirms the value of developmentally appropriate early childhood education;
6. The changes in family structures and the number of families where both parents work outside the home have increased the demand for early childhood provision, both in the field of care and of education. It is important that such provision is of high quality, based on the needs of the individual child and his/her age group;
7. In the absence of publicly funded programs for young children, the gap between children living in poor families and those living in rich families will increase;
8. Programs that integrate and co-ordinate the delivery of health, education and social services to children support families in caring for their children;
9. Experience shows that early childhood education can be an effective way to prevent children from being used in child labour;
10. Early childhood education can be defined as all kinds of education taking place before compulsory schooling and provided in different kinds of settings. There are differences between countries in the ways in which early childhood education is organised with respect to links with primary education or childcare and governmental responsibility for funding and governance, etc. There is a wide range of different ways of organising early childhood education around the world;
11. Between 1985 and 1995, the gross enrolment ratio in early childhood education in the world increased from 26.7% to 30.1%;
12. Early childhood education is, to a larger extent than primary and secondary education, run by community groups and private enterprise;
13. A larger percentage of teachers in early childhood education are women than in other sectors of education;
14. Education of early childhood teachers differs greatly between countries. Unfortunately, there are still many countries which do not have specific teacher education for early childhood teachers, and among those countries that offer such an education, there are shortcomings such as a shortage of places available and/or a low standard of education.
Recommends that:

15. Early childhood education should be a public service and form an integral part of the education system. Full responsibility for early childhood education should be given to the Ministry of Education at national or regional level. Appropriate arrangements should be devised to allow for continuity and co-ordination between early childhood education and primary education.

16. Sufficient resources must be made available within the education budget of each country in order to provide for high quality early childhood education, free of charge and accessible to all.

17. It is important that the size of a class or a group within early childhood education should be kept within reasonable limits. The character of the pedagogical activities and the age of the children must be seen as important factors in favour of small groups.

18. Everything should be done to ensure that children learn to live together by showing respect for each other's personality and culture. Equal opportunities, the fight against racism, discrimination and violence, the basic concepts of tolerance, understanding and acceptance are important issues that should be dealt with in early childhood education.

19. Children with special needs should be given special education and be integrated into suitable early childhood education programmes in which their learning is enhanced by appropriate staff-child ratios, environments and support services. Teachers and support staff must receive appropriate training to deal with the special needs of the children. No child should be excluded from early childhood education.

20. Appropriate structures should be set up to ensure that, as early as possible, effective efforts are made to observe, identify and prevent education and health problems relating to the child. Effective support should be provided where necessary to minimise difficulties when a need has been identified.

21. The same status of pedagogical training should be provided for all teachers, including early childhood teachers, so as to promote continuity in the educational system. Appropriate measures should be taken to ensure that both men and women are recruited and trained as early childhood teachers. Teachers in early childhood education should have the same rights, status and entitlements as teachers in other sectors.

22. Early childhood institutions are important places where the child lays the foundations of future learning (language, motor, graphic, mathematics, relational skills), through play in particular. Children must be given every opportunity to fully develop all their potential not only in the cognitive area, but also socially, emotionally and physically. Early childhood institutions must be equipped in such a way as to allow teachers to develop a variety of creative activities, including music, rhythm, mime, the use of body expression, painting and all manual skills. Physical education has an important role in this training and is essential to early childhood education.

EI should:

23. Promote the ideas and recommendations expressed in this resolution through contacts and discussions with UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, OECD and other relevant intergovernmental organisations.

24. In contacts with UNESCO and other intergovernmental organisations dealing with education, propose the promotion of programmes that facilitate the exchange of ideas and experience among teachers in early childhood education, in order to promote knowledge of the different systems and ways in which early childhood education operates in countries around the world.

25. Support all efforts to raise awareness with regard to the crucial role played by early childhood education in the development of the skills and knowledge of the child.

26. Continue to follow developments within early childhood education and further development of this policy area and support the efforts of its members in advocating for publicly funded, high quality early childhood education programs.