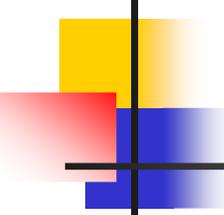# OMEP Presentation

An Exploration of the Practitioner Role in Promoting Information and Communications Technology (ICT) as a Learning Tool in Early Childhood Education

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April 2011

Background to study

- Author completing European Masters in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)
- High level of Information Communications Technology as part of study programme
- Various levels of ICT expertise within study group
- Realisation of importance and benefits of ICT use for children and staff in ECCE setting
- Particular interest in equality issues
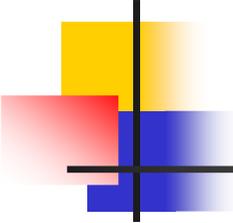
ICT and Children

- 'Digital generation' (Papert, 1996)

- 'Cyberkids' (Holloway and Valentine 2003)

- 'The millennials' (Yelland 2007).

- "Digital Native" or "Digital Immigrant" ? (Prensky2001)

- "Digital Divide" (OECD 2001)

ICT and ECCE

It is well documented that play is the work of the child and toys are the tools of this play so we now need to ask are the current tools of children's play namely ICT reflected and optimised in early years settings (McDermott 2009).
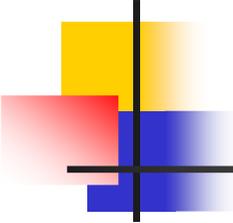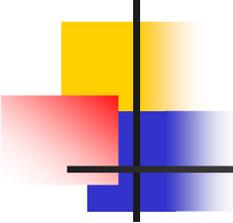
Literature Review

We know from studies conducted by Downey et al., (2006), that most children in Ireland have access to a wide range of ICT equipment and materials in their home environment.

However there is also concern that some children do not have any access to ICT (OECD 2001).

Literature Review

- Blatchford and Whitebread (2003), consider it important that young children begin to develop "technological literacy". They define this as:

- …a new form of literacy, but it is one that is increasingly considered to represent an essential curriculum entitlement in any broad and balanced curriculum for the twenty-first century (Siraj-Blatchford & Whitebread, 2003, p. 1).
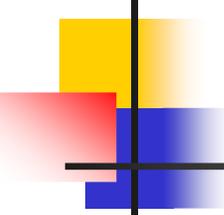
ICT and ECCE

- According to Papert (1996) computers open opportunities for new forms of learning that are far more consistent with the nature of young children than that of the majority of older people

- Resnick (2000)notes children are often more competent and confident with ICT than many adults are and this type of reversal hasn't happened before.
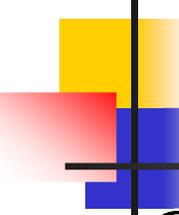
Potential Benefits of using ICT

- Cultural link between home and school

- Access to instant information

- Access to specialised educational software

- Digital cameras enable the use of visual records which can overcome language barriers within the kindergarten, and encourage cross-cultural interaction between children (Bolgan 2004).

- Particular benefits for children with special needs
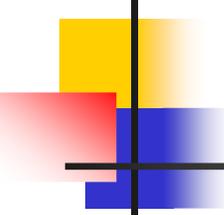
Focus of study

- Practitioner use of digital cameras and computers in a number of
  - Private pre school services
  - Community pre school services
  - Primary schools
  - ✓ In addition a group of FETAC Level 5 and 6 students were included in the study.
  - ✓ Content of ICT training in ECCE courses

Síolta The National Quality Framework (NQF)
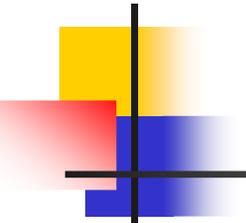
- Síolta has specific references to the use of ICT for work with adults and children in services. These include the use of ICT for e-mail and newsletters with parents, development of photographic displays and real life images, the use of computer software to promote positive understandings and regard for the identity and rights of others and curriculum implementation (Síolta 2005).
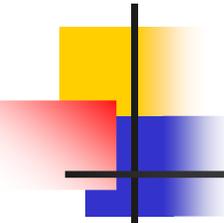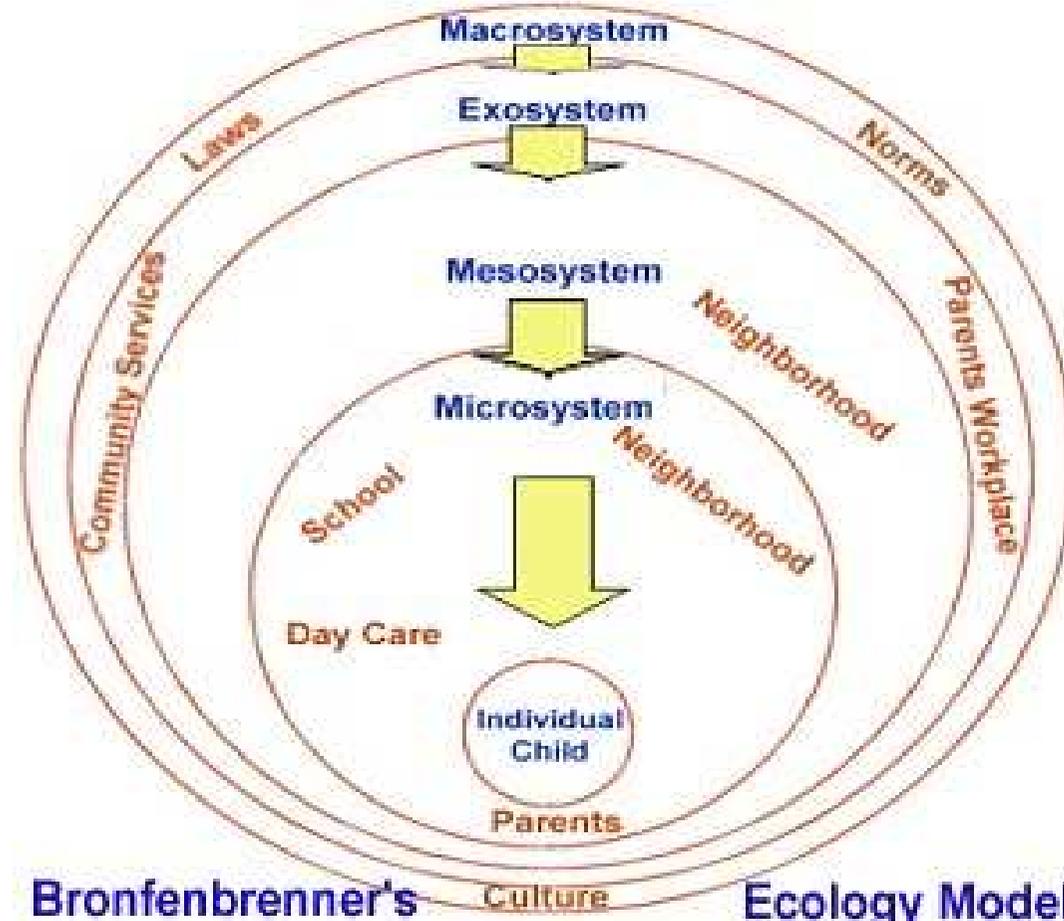
Aistear – A Framework for Early Learning and ICT

- Aistear themes include communication and the importance of assistive technology

- High level of technology used in the research, development and dissemination of Aistear (NCCA 2004).
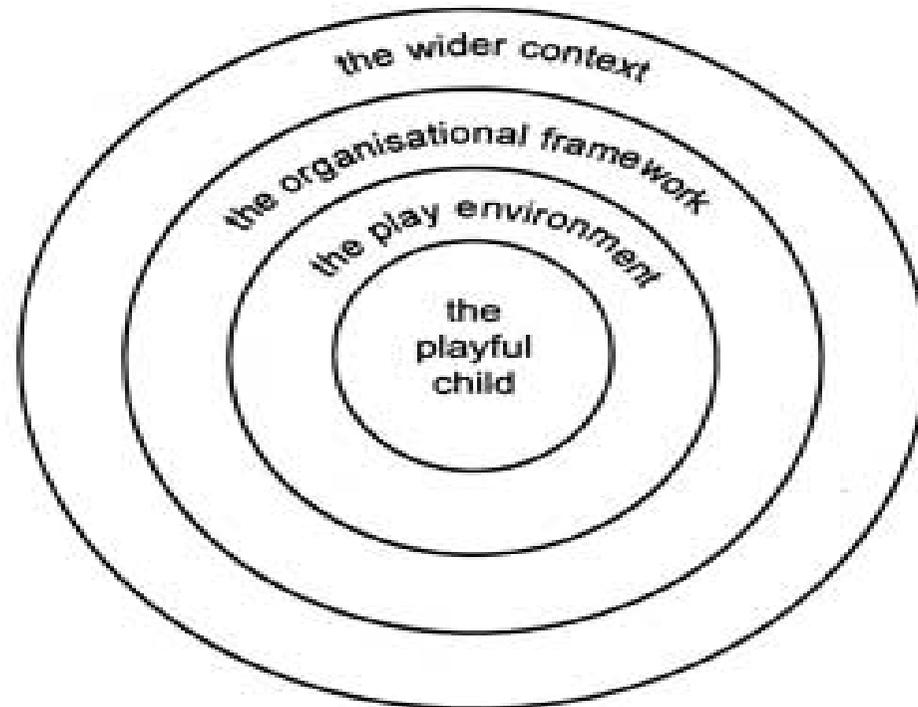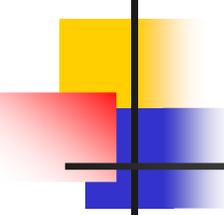
Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner

Bronfenbrenner's Ecology Model

Pre school services may be considered an
Ecological 'Niche' of child
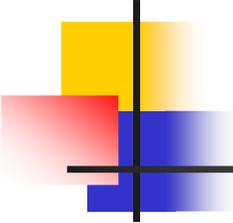
Vygotsky Sociocultural Theory

- Zone of Proximal Development

- What a child can do with support today they will do on their own tomorrow

- Sociocultural tools refer to the common tools in use within the society

- ICT can be considered a common tool in most households in Ireland (Downey et al 2006)

ICT Literacy

- Much of the literature supports the notion that children can begin to develop ICT capability and 'ICT literacy' as part of their early childhood education experiences (Sheridan & Pramling Samuelsson, 2003; Siraj-Blatchford & Whitebread, 2003; Broadfoot 2000: Bolgan 2004).
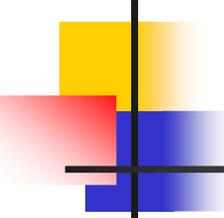
Findings

- High percentage of staff and students support the use of ICT in services but there are also some concerns.

- Majority of services have a digital camera for staff use.

- Less than half of services reported children had very limited access to computers.

- Most respondents expressed a need for training in the use of computers with children.
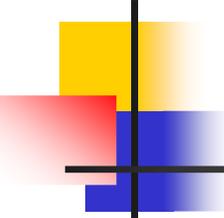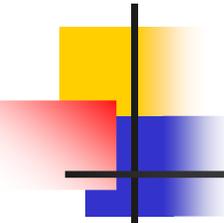
Future Challenges

- Addressing staff concerns relating to the use of ICT in ECCE

- Student and Staff Training in ICT (ICT Module)

- Importance of ICT technical support

- Further research on the potential benefits of ICT in early years services

- Overall importance of Continuing Professional Development of early years staff
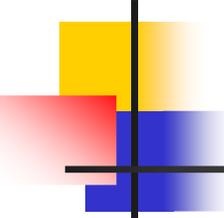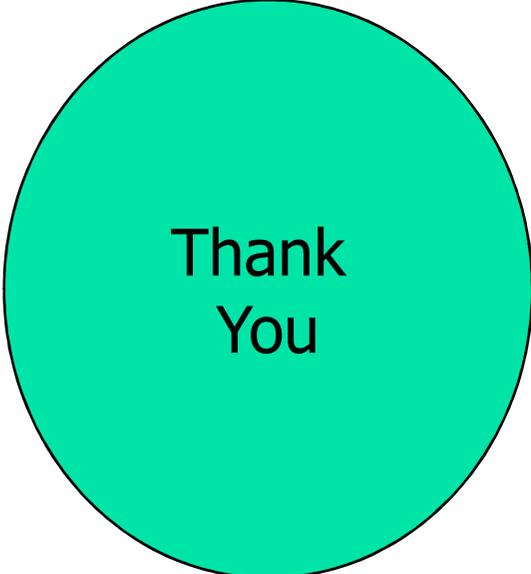
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Any Questions?

Thank
You