

Readiness for Change:
**Baseline Data on Readiness to Implement the
Síolta Framework**

EVALUATION OF THE
'PREPARING FOR LIFE'
EARLY CHILDHOOD
INTERVENTION PROGRAMME

By
UCD GEARY INSTITUTE
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UCD Geary Institute,
University College Dublin,
Belfield, Dublin 4, Ireland

T +353 1 716 4637
F +353 1 716 1108
E-mail: geary@ucd.ie



Preparing for Life
Bell Building
Darndale/Belcamp Village Centre,
Dublin 17

T +353 1 877 1509
F +353 1 877 1586
E-mail: info@preparingforlife.ie

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Summary of Findings

This report is the first of two reports related to the implementation of the Síolta framework in the Early Childhood Care and Education Centres (ECCEC) located in the *Preparing for Life (PFL)* catchment area. The study was conducted by the UCD Geary Institute who have been commissioned by the Northside Partnership to assess the factors influencing the uptake of the Síolta framework. Síolta is a national quality assurance framework detailing best practice standards for early childhood care and education in Ireland. This report examines staff perceptions and attitudes toward the Síolta framework and links such attitudes to job satisfaction and the work environment.

Purpose and Description of the Report

One of the supports offered to families as part of the *PFL* programme is to provide one year's access to a preschool or childcare place in the year prior to school-entry. High quality childcare has been linked to a host of positive outcomes such as increased cognitive abilities, language development, and emotional and social development (Kagan & Neuman, 1997; NICHD, 2000; 2002; 2008; NICHD & Duncan, 2003). *PFL* have therefore engaged the services of a Síolta coordinator to pilot and implement the Síolta framework in the ECCECs in the *PFL* catchment area. It is hoped that improving the quality of care in the local preschools attended by the *PFL* cohort will lead to greater levels of school readiness.

Organisational Change

The introduction of the Síolta framework will result in a change in the practices for some or all of the participating ECCECs. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, the implementation of the Síolta framework is analysed in the context of an organisational change. Organisational change is a major source of workplace stress and can be associated with a wide range of negative behavioural, psychological, and physiological outcomes including job loss, reduced status, loss of identity, interpersonal conflict, threats to self esteem, reduced well being, anxiety, and uncertainty (Ashford, 1988; Kanter, 1983; Martin, Jones, & Callan, 2005; Schweiger & Ivancevich, 1985; Terry, Callan, & Sartori, 1996). The aim of this study is to capture factors that may influence attitudes towards the Síolta framework and its subsequent success.

Method

Baseline measures of 'readiness for change' were assessed using a paper and pencil questionnaire. The questionnaire assessing basic demographics, knowledge of the Síolta framework, readiness for the Síolta change, job satisfaction, and the work environment was administered to all staff working in participating ECCECs. In total, 120 staff across 9 centres completed the survey resulting in a high response rate.

Results

Results show that staff of ECCECs in the *PFL* catchment area were happy with the proposed introduction of the Síolta framework. On average, 84% of respondents believed that their centre is ready for the change. Personal characteristics such as age, education level, and years working in the childcare sector had little impact on the staffs' support for the change, while factors related to group dynamics, such as the work environment and job satisfaction, were found to be significantly associated with readiness for change.

- Very few staff (5%) reported that they knew a large amount about the Síolta framework, 23% reported knowing a moderate amount, 41% of respondents reported knowing a little bit, 25% reported knowing not very much, and 2% of staff reported not knowing anything about the Síolta framework.
- Despite knowing little about the Síolta framework, 89% of staff reported that their early childhood care and education centre would be successful at implementing the framework.
- On average, staff rated all domains related to organisational change relatively high, indicating that employees are ready for the introduction of the Síolta framework. *Efficacy* received the highest rating followed by *appropriateness*, *principal support*, *discrepancy*, and lastly *valence*. *Overall readiness for change* was rated 5.60 out of 7, suggesting that on the whole, staff feel they are ready for the implementation of the Síolta framework.
- Staff also rated their work environment positively. Specifically, *collegiality*, *supervisor support*, and *task orientation* received the highest ratings. *Goal consensus*, *innovativeness*, and *physical setting* were rated in the middle and, *decision making*, *clarity*, and *professional growth* received the lowest ratings by staff in the ECCECs.
- Overall, staff would like more influence in the decision making processes in their centres, specifically in relation to ordering materials for the centre, interviewing, programme objectives, and training.
- Approximately 94% of staff are satisfied with their job. They are most satisfied with the *work* they do on the job, followed by the *colleagues*, and the *job* itself. The *employment setting* and *available resources* were rated lowest by respondents.
- Although few relationships emerged between the Organisational Change Recipients' Belief Scale (OCBRS) and staff characteristics, the *discrepancy* and *principal support* domains of the OCBRS are consistently and significantly related to work environment and job satisfaction. While the strengths of these relationships are modest, these results suggest that a positive work environment and greater job satisfaction are associated with a lower belief that there is a need for change, but a higher belief that the staff will be supported by management if the change is introduced.

The next report in this series will link the quality level achieved by each ECCEC as a consequence of the Síolta framework to these baseline measures of readiness for change, work environment and job satisfaction. The findings of these reports may help aid the successful implementation and roll-out of the Síolta framework nationally.

I. Introduction

a) Background and Aims

This report is the first of two reports related to the implementation and uptake of the Síolta framework in Early Childhood Care and Education Centres (ECCEC) located in the *Preparing for Life (PFL)* catchment area. The study was conducted by the UCD Geary Institute who have been commissioned by the Northside Partnership to assess factors related to the effective implementation, or lack thereof, of the Síolta framework. This study is part of an overall evaluation of the *PFL* early childhood intervention programme and describes the results of a questionnaire administered to staff employed in the local ECCECs. The questionnaire was designed to assess factors that may influence the success or failure of reaching the Síolta standards and includes measures related to individual characteristics of the respondent, knowledge of the Síolta framework, organisational change, the work environment, and job satisfaction. The report assesses employee perceptions of change and attitudes toward Síolta and links such perceptions and attitudes to job satisfaction and the work environment. The final report will link these baseline measures to the quality level achieved by each of the ECCECs at the end of the Síolta process.

b) Overview of Report

The report describes baseline data from nine ECCECs located in the *PFL* catchment area and is organized as follows: Section II provides a description of the Síolta framework, Section III discusses organisational change theory which underlies the analyses, Section IV describes the method employed, Section V presents the results, and finally, Section VI summarises and concludes the report.

II. Description of Síolta

a) The Síolta Framework

Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education, is a national quality assurance framework which details best practice standards for early childhood care and education in Ireland. It aims to improve the quality of ECCECs which work with children between the ages of 0 and 6 years. The framework has been designed by the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE) and was launched in May, 2006 by the Minister for Children. The Síolta framework is the first nationally agreed upon set of quality standards for early childhood education. According to the Síolta manual, this framework “*represents comprehensive guidance for quality in service delivery and professional practice. Together with other documents...it contributes to a blueprint for the development of early childhood care and education in Ireland.*”

Síolta was developed with the intention to define, assess, and support the quality of ECCECs. It operates by encouraging staff to reflect upon and assess the quality of service they provide to children. To this effect, the Síolta framework aims to recognise the strengths of an ECCEC while simultaneously identifying areas in need of improvement, therefore encouraging continuous quality improvement in ECCECs serving young children.

Síolta operates under twelve inter-dependent principles¹ representing a comprehensive idea of quality standards in ECCECs. The twelve Síolta principles have helped inform the sixteen national standards² developed under the Síolta framework, which together form a broad structure for quality in ECCECs. Each standard is broken down into several components and is composed of multiple areas of reflection.

b) The Síolta Quality Assurance Process

Síolta is currently being piloted in the preschools and primary schools in the *PFL* catchment area. As part of this process, *PFL* has employed a Síolta coordinator to oversee this work. The coordinator works directly with the ECCECs to facilitate achievement of the standards.

There are three stages to the Síolta process: (1) registration, (2) baseline assessment and evidence collection, and (3) validation. First, an ECCEC must register with the Síolta coordinator. This involves expressing an interest in the framework, learning about the framework, and familiarising with the Síolta Quality Assurance Process. The second step consists of a baseline assessment, action planning, and an evidence collection period. During this time, the ECCEC engages with the Síolta coordinator to conduct a self assessment, develop a plan of action, and build a portfolio for the centre. The self assessment is carried out with the Síolta coordinator. During this process, participants are asked to reflect on the practices of their centre in relation to the 16 Síolta standards. To facilitate the self assessment, these standards are broken down into 75 components upon which the reflection is based. These reflection points are open-ended questions used to facilitate thoughtful discussion in which employees reflect on the quality of individual and centre work. The self assessment is conducted as a whole centre and during the process, centre staff review and reflect, as a group, on the level of quality practice as it relates to each Síolta component. Staff rate their centre on a scale of one (low) to four (high) for each component. Ratings include ‘no evidence of quality,’ ‘some evidence of quality,’ ‘significant evidence of quality, but some issues still outstanding,’ or ‘comprehensive evidence of quality.’

In addition to providing the numerical ratings of their centre, the group describes why they rated the centre in such a way and provide evidence to support this rating. This assessment occurs after the ECCEC has made the decision to engage with Síolta. Upon completion of the baseline assessment the centre works with the Síolta coordinator to produce an action plan to gather evidence in support of the self assessment, identify a timeline for the process to improve upon the Síolta standards, and describe the work that will take place over a fixed period of time limited to a maximum of 18 months. Once the developmental work has been carried out, ECCECs review and submit the self assessment tool and portfolio of evidence. At this stage, it is hoped that improvements relating to all 16 Síolta standards have been completed by the centre.

The final stage in the Síolta Quality Assurance Process is validation. During this phase, the baseline self assessment tool and portfolio are submitted and an external validator who re-evaluates the quality level in the centre. Once an external validator has assessed the setting, a decision on whether or not the centre has achieved the level of quality outlined in the portfolio submitted by the centre is

¹ The twelve Síolta principles are: The Value of Early Childhood, Children First, Parents, Relationships, Equality, Diversity, Environments, Welfare, Role of the Adult, Teamwork, Pedagogy, and Play.

² The sixteen Síolta standards are: Rights of the Child, Environments, Parents and Families, Consultation, Interactions, Play, Curriculum, Planning and Evaluation, Health and Welfare, Organisation, Professional Practice, Communication, Transitions, Identity and Belonging, Legislation and Regulation, and Community Involvement.

made. If the level of quality claimed has been achieved a quality rating, valid for a two year period, is given to the centre.

c) *PFL* & the *Síolta* Framework

One of the supports offered to families as part of the *PFL* programme is to provide one year's access to a preschool or childcare place. *PFL* may fund this place if an appropriate affordable or free place can not be accessed by the family. The programme encourages families to avail of this service in the year prior to school entry. High quality childcare has been linked to a host of positive outcomes such as increased cognitive abilities, language development, and emotional and social development (Kagan & Neuman, 1997; NICHD, 2000; 2002; 2008; NICHD & Duncan, 2003). Additionally, participation in high quality childcare has been shown to have a greater impact on children from low income families (Barnett, 1995). Well designed early education programmes serving children living in disadvantaged areas in the year prior to school entry have been shown to generate benefits for government, society, and for the children themselves across a wide range of outcomes (Karoly & Bigelow, 2005).

Therefore, *PFL* have engaged the services of a *Síolta* coordinator to pilot and implement the *Síolta* framework in the ECCECs in the *PFL* catchment area. It is hoped that improving the quality of care in the local preschools will lead to greater levels of school readiness among the *PFL* cohort. As the implementation of the *Síolta* Quality Assurance Process is an 18-month process, all preschools should have completed the process by the time the *PFL* cohort reach the preschool age of three. *PFL* not only wish to determine the overall quality improvements in the preschools, but also to examine the factors that influence the success or non-success of the *Síolta* framework. For example, why some centres may successfully reach the *Síolta* standards and others may not.

The introduction of this new framework into ECCECs will result in a change in the practices for some or all of the participating centres. Therefore, for the purposes of this analysis, the implementation of the *Síolta* framework is discussed and analysed in the context of an organisational change.

III. Organisational Change

a) Relevance of Organisational Change Theory

The implementation of the *Síolta* framework may represent a significant change in the practices of some of the ECCECs located in the *PFL* catchment area. As the implementation of this framework represents an organisational change it is important to understand how attitudes toward this change may influence its success. This review will define organisational change and discuss the organisational and contextual factors that have been identified as being important influences on employee acceptance of organisational change.

Organisational change is a major source of workplace stress and can be associated with a wide range of negative behavioural, psychological, and physiological outcomes including job loss, reduced status, loss of identity, interpersonal conflict, threats to self esteem, reduced well being, anxiety, and uncertainty (Ashford, 1988; Kanter, 1983; Martin, Jones, & Callan, 2005; Schweiger & Ivancevich, 1985; Terry, Callan, & Sartori, 1996). The importance of staff acceptance of organisational change is

widely recognised (e.g., Gilmore & Barnett, 1992; Sagie & Koslowsky, 1994) as resistance to organisational change can slow or prevent the success of the change (Leiter & Harvie, 1998).

b) Organisational and Contextual Factors

Munton, Mooney, & Rowland (1997) in a study of childcare nurseries, suggest that organisational characteristics can have an influence on a centre's ability to change their practices. Evidence shows that factors such as participatory management styles, employee involvement in decision-making, and established procedures for self assessment (Jorde-Bloom, 1995; Stephens & Wilkinson, 1995) are often influential in the success of facilitating organisational changes. Furthermore, greater staff involvement in tactical decision-making during planned organisational change is associated with increased acceptance of change, work satisfaction, and perceived effectiveness of the change (Sagie & Koslowsky, 1994). For example, research has demonstrated that change is less likely to be successful where staff feel that they have little ownership of ideas and that change is generally imposed from above (Rodd, 1994). Munton & Mooney (1999) summarise the empirical evidence by stating that childcare centres where change is less likely to succeed are characterised by staff as having low management support, avoiding taking risks, predominantly authoritarian as opposed to participative management styles, high in control, low in integration, and intolerant of conflict.

Another important contextual factor in organisational change is effective supervision which is correlated with higher morale and productivity in staff undergoing an organisational change (Shipper, 1991). Hand-in-hand with effective supervision is effective communication, which is important for staff morale and change acceptance. Specifically, a retrospective study of over 3,000 hospital staff, whose working environment underwent significant change and restructuring, found that supportive supervision, confidence in management, effective communication, and meaningfulness of work were associated with a positive perception of change. Furthermore, confidence in management and effective communication were both directly linked to an acceptance of change, while professional efficacy was a mediating factor between meaningfulness of work and acceptance of change (Leiter & Harvie, 1998). The above study confirms the importance of the organisational variables of effective communication, confidence in management, supervisor support, and meaningfulness of work in aiding staff to accept change.

c) Organisational Change and Relevance to the Síolta framework

Based on a review of the literature,³ the factors that may influence organisational change and consequently the uptake of the Síolta framework are varied and complex. Organisational elements which have been found to influence employee reactions to change include management style, management support, style of employee assessment, quality of supervision, quality of communication, level of employee confidence in management, meaningfulness of work, and the context of the change. The context of change includes multiple changes occurring simultaneously, potential change in status as a result of the organisational change, and the psychological climate of the workplace (e.g., leader vision, employee relationships). This report incorporates these elements by summarizing and analysing the views of staff in ECCECs currently implementing the Síolta framework.

³ Available upon request.

IV. Method

Questionnaires assessing basic demographics, knowledge of the Síolta framework, readiness for the Síolta change, job satisfaction, and the work environment were administered to all staff working in participating ECCECs. The data collection period took place between February and June, 2009. It was conducted after the staff had registered with the Síolta framework, but before they began the self-assessment (i.e., prior to stage 2). All staff were invited to participate by completing a paper and pencil questionnaire. A trained research assistant was available to assist participants with completing the questionnaires if needed.

a) Participants

The report presents the findings from nine preschools located in the *PFL* catchment area. In total, 120 respondents completed the questionnaire. The number of respondents from each ECCEC ranged from two to 71.⁴ Job descriptions of respondents varied and included roles such as childcare assistant, centre manager, childcare worker, early start teacher, playgroup assistant, special needs assistant, and teacher. Job descriptions that did not involve direct involvement with children on a regular basis ($n=16$) were excluded from the analyses. Therefore, the analyses reported below are based on the responses of 104 participants who have direct involvement with children in the ECCECs on a regular basis. The responses from staff in all centres were aggregated in the analyses to ensure confidentiality of the centres and to guarantee that the responses of employees at any one centre could not be identified. Due to the varying number of staff working at each centre, all analyses were conducted with and without using frequency weights. As there were no major differences across both sets of results, the unweighted analyses are presented here.

The survey consists of several questions related to the background information of the participant. Specifically, information related to basic demographics, duration and role in the centre was obtained. Overall, 38% of respondents work more than 35 hours per week, 44% work between 20 to 35 hours per week, and 18% of respondents are employed part time, working between 10 and 19 hours per week. The average age of respondents is 37 ($SD = 10.55$) years, with a range of 20 years to 64 years of age. All respondents, bar one, are female. On average, respondents had been working in the field of early childhood care and education for 8 ($SD = 7.23$) years, had been in their current centre for 5 ($SD = 4.35$) years, and in their current role at the centre for 4 ($SD = 5.03$) years.

In terms of education, 45% of respondents have a Junior Certification or lower, with those possessing a Junior Certification making up 24% of the cohort. Additionally, 6% of respondents have some upper secondary education, 10% have a Leaving Certification, 25% have a non degree qualification, 10% have a primary degree, and 3% have a postgraduate qualification.

b) Key Instruments

The study was developed and conducted under the theoretical framework of Readiness for Change (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993). Several questions measuring knowledge of the Síolta framework and perceptions as to whether the centre would be successful at meeting the Síolta standards were included in the questionnaire. Additionally, standardized measures were used to

⁴ The response rate for questionnaires completed by centre staff could not be calculated as the exact number of questionnaires distributed to each early childhood care and education centre is unknown. However, the response rate is likely to be quite high (>90%) based on the number of staff employed in the centres.

assess other factors related to organisational change such as work environment and job satisfaction. The key instruments used in the study are described in detail below.

(1) Readiness for Change

Organisational Change Recipients' Belief Scale (OCRBS; Armenakis, Bernerth, Pitts, & Walker, 2007): This 24-item measure assesses respondents' readiness for change across five domains. Respondents are asked to rate how much they agree or disagree with each statement on a 7 point Likert scale ranging from '(1) Strongly Disagree' to '(7) Strongly Agree.' This scale provides scores in five domains. *Discrepancy* (4 items; $\alpha^5 = .87$) refers to employees' beliefs on whether the need for change is present in the centre and includes items such as "We need to change the way we do some things in this organisation" and "A change is needed to improve our operations." *Appropriateness* (5 items; $\alpha = .87$) assesses the necessity or appropriateness of the change for the organisation and is composed of items such as "This organisational change will prove to be best for our situation" and "The change that we are implementing is correct for our situation." *Efficacy* (5 items; $\alpha = .83$) represents the capacity of the organisation to implement the change and comprises items such as "I have the capability to implement the change that is initiated" and "I believe we can successfully implement this change." *Principal Support* (6 items, $\alpha = .80$) refers to the support provided by managers in the centre and includes items such as "The top management support this change" and "The majority of my respected peers (co-workers) are dedicated to making this change work." *Valence* (4 items, $\alpha = .63$) is defined as the appeal of the perceived outcome of the change and is composed of items such as "With this change in my job, I will experience more self-fulfilment" and "The change in my job assignments will increase my feelings of accomplishment." This OCRBS measure also yields an *overall readiness for change* score (24 items, $\alpha = .91$) which represents the respondents overall readiness for the proposed change.

Scores for each domain represent the mean of responses for domain specific items and are presented on a scale of 1 to 7, representing 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree.' A score in the middle of this continuum signifies that centre staff neither agree nor disagree with that domain. Therefore, higher scores on the OCRBS domains are indicative of greater staff agreement with that domain. The overall readiness for change score represents the mean of all 24 items on this instrument. Note that scores were only calculated for domains in which at least 50% of the items comprising that domain were completed by the respondent.

(2) Work Environment

Early Childhood Work Environment Survey (adapted from Jorde-Bloom, 1996): The early childhood work environment survey is a measure of childcare centre employees' perceptions about the organisation. Each domain consists of 10 items in which the respondent is asked to select the items that represent the overall conditions in the centre as they are most of the time. Questions related to nine categories representing various aspects of the work environment were selected for use in the present study. These categories related to *collegiality* or the degree to which centre staff interact and support one another, *professional growth* which represents the degree to which the centre provides opportunities for professional growth for the staff, *supervisor support* or the supportiveness and helpfulness of staff

⁵ α represents the standardised Cronbach alpha coefficient (Cronbach, 1951) for each domain of the Organisational Change Recipients' Belief Scale. The standardised Cronbach alpha coefficient is a measure of the reliability of each scale. Generally, a standardised Cronbach alpha coefficient of .70 or above is considered acceptable in the literature and illustrates that the domain is deemed reliable.

supervision, *clarity* or the degree to which centre policies, procedures, and responsibilities are described and achieved, *decision making* represents the freedom that staff have to make decisions that are directly related to them, *goal consensus* refers to the amount of agreement on school philosophies, *task orientation* is defined as the importance placed on good planning, efficiency, and getting the job done, *physical setting* refers to the degree to which respondents feel the setting is sufficient and organized, and *innovativeness* represents the degree to which staff are encouraged to be creative and innovative in their work.

The collegiality, supervisor support, decision making, goal consensus, task orientation, physical setting, and innovativeness domains all contain five positive and five negative items. Scores for these domains are calculated by summing the number of responses endorsed within that domain. Items with a positive valence contribute 1 point to the total score, while items with a negative valence subtract 1 point from the total score, resulting in a score ranging from -5 to 5. Domain scores are then converted to a scale ranging from 0 to 10, enhancing the interpretability and comparison of scores across domains. The professional growth and clarity domains both contain 10 items with a positive valence. Therefore, these scores are calculated by summing the number of responses endorsed for each domain. In sum, scores for all domains are presented on a scale ranging from 0 to 10 with lower scores indicative of centres performing low on that specific domain and higher scores are representative of higher ratings on that domain.

In addition to the nine domains described above, this instrument assesses the amount of *current influence* staff have in various decisions made within the centre and the amount of *desired influence* staff would like to have in the centre's decisions. Staff rate the amount of influence they currently have or would like to have on various centre decisions as 0 representing 'very little influence,' 5, signifying 'some influence,' or 10 meaning 'considerable influence.' Therefore, the total score for these categories ranges from 0 to 10 with the higher number representing a greater amount of influence.

(3) Job Satisfaction

Global Job Satisfaction: Global job satisfaction of centre staff is measured using the following question: 'On the whole, how satisfied would you say you are with your current job?' Responses are provided on a 7 point Likert scale ranging from '(1) Very Satisfied to '(7) Very Dissatisfied.' The question is reverse scored such that higher values are indicative of higher job satisfaction to facilitate comparisons with other instruments used in the analysis.

Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS; Andrews & Withey, 1976): This instrument consists of five items in which the respondent rates how he/she feels about various aspects related to his/her job including the *job* itself, his/her *colleagues*, the *work* the respondent does on the job, the *employment setting*, and *available resources*. The respondent is instructed to rate these items on a scale ranging from 1 meaning 'Delighted' to 7 meaning 'Terrible.' Responses on this measure are reverse scored such that higher scores are indicative of greater job satisfaction to facilitate comparisons with other instruments used in the study.

V. Results⁶

Overall, the results show that ECCECs in the *PFL* catchment area were happy with the proposed introduction of the *Síolta* framework. On average, 84% of respondents believed that their centre was ready for the change. Personal characteristics such as age, education level, years working in early childhood care and education, years working in the current centre, and years working in the current role had little impact on the respondents' support for the change. Factors related to group dynamics, such as the work environment and job satisfaction, were found to be significantly associated with readiness for change.

a) Knowledge of *Síolta* and Perceptions of Success

Staff members were asked to assess their *knowledge* of the *Síolta* framework. As shown in Figure 1, 41% of respondents felt that they knew 'a little bit' about the *Síolta* framework. A further 26% of respondents stated that they knew a 'moderate amount,' while 25% reported knowing 'not very much' about the *Síolta* framework. Furthermore, few people indicated that they either knew a 'large amount' or 'nothing' about the *Síolta* framework. These results may reflect the timing of the data collection, which took place after the centre registered with the framework, had some information meetings with the *Síolta* co-ordinator, but before the staff had fully engaged with the *Síolta* coordinator.

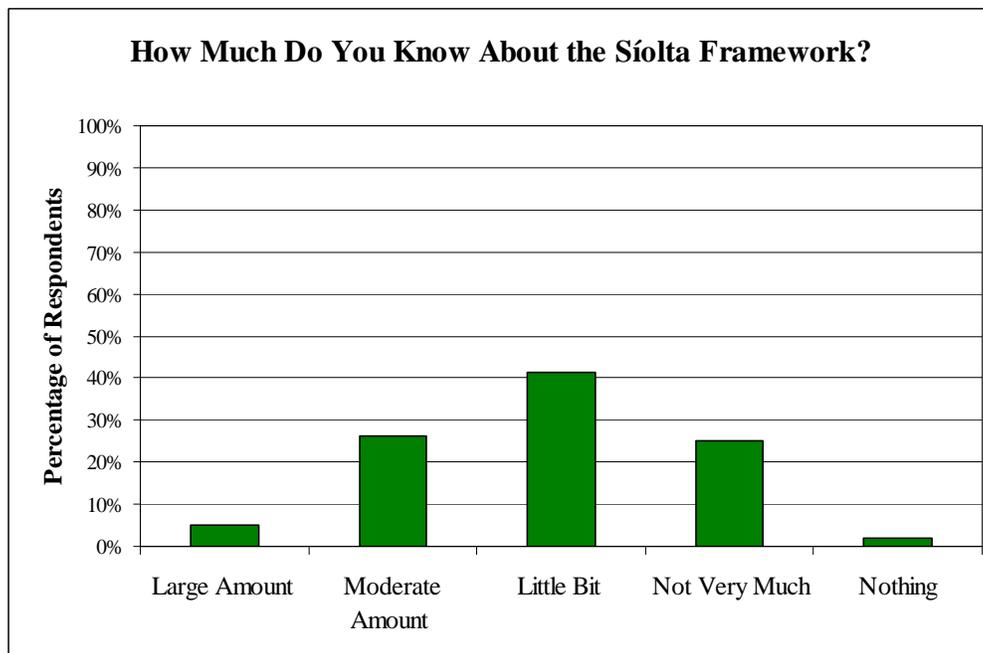


Figure 1. Staff ratings of knowledge of the *Síolta* framework.

⁶ The p-value represents the probability that the result obtained is due to chance rather than a true relationship between variables. Consistent with the literature, p-values below 0.05 (5%) are considered to be statistically significant in the present report. A p-value of less than 0.05 (5%), 0.01 (1%), 0.001 (0.1%) conveys that the probability of observing a difference as a result of chance is less than 5%, 1% and 0.1%, respectively.

Respondents also were asked whether or not their centre would be successful at *meeting the Síolta standards*. As represented in Figure 2, an overwhelming majority (89%) indicated that their centre would be successful at meeting the Síolta standards and only 1% of staff stated that the centre would be unsuccessful. A further 10% stated that they did not know if their centre would be successful at reaching the standards. This level of confidence in implementing the Síolta framework is consistent with the strong sense of readiness for change.

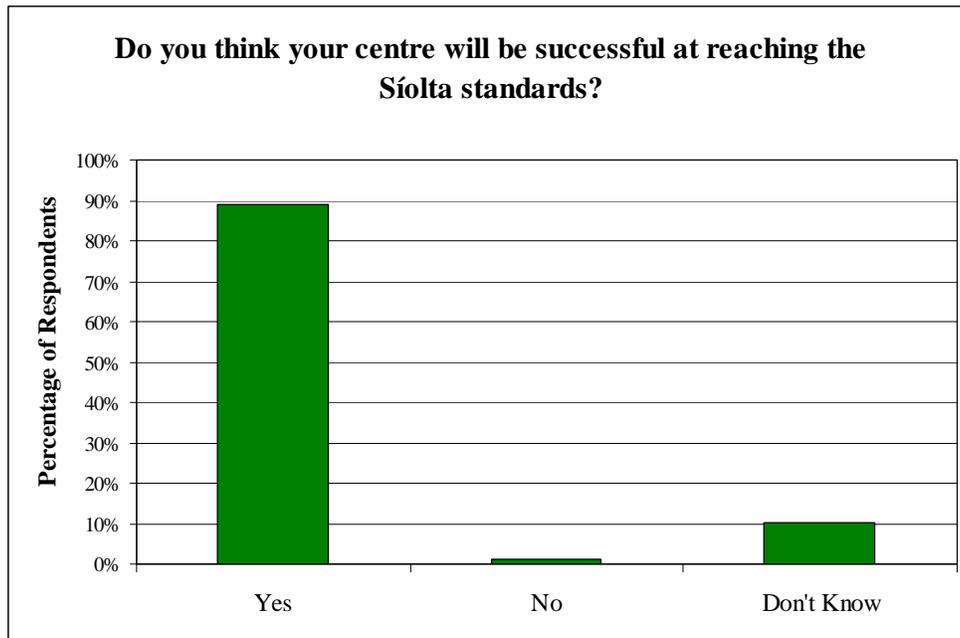


Figure 2. Staff perceptions of centre success.

b) Readiness for Change

Table 1 reports the average readiness for change scores in each of the Organisational Change Recipients' Belief Scale (OCBRS) domains. The scores are high across all domains, indicating that employees in the ECCECs were ready for the introduction of the Síolta framework. *Efficacy* received the highest rating suggesting that centre staff felt that their centre had the ability to implement the Síolta framework. The second highest rating was in the *appropriateness* domain. Thus, the staff felt that the introduction of the Síolta framework was appropriate for their ECCEC. The *principal support* domain, which represents support provided by managers in the centre, received the third highest rating followed by the *discrepancy* domain which refers to employees' belief on whether the need for the change is present in the centre. The scores for these domains fall between 'Agree a Little' (5) and 'Agree' (6) on a Likert scale indicating a high level of support for the change. The lowest score was found to be in the *valence* domain, indicating that the perceived benefits associated with the introduction of the Síolta standards were not as strongly felt as the other drivers of change. Finally, *overall readiness for change* was rated 5.60 out of 7, suggesting that on the whole, staff felt they were ready for the implementation of the Síolta framework.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics of the OCBRS domains

Domain	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Discrepancy	103	5.28	1.21	2.00	7.00
Appropriateness	103	5.99	0.82	2.25	7.00
Efficacy	103	6.18	0.62	4.00	7.00
Principal Support	103	5.86	0.83	2.67	7.00
Valence	103	4.93	0.89	1.50	7.00
Overall	103	5.70	0.61	3.79	6.87

Figure 3 below shows six distribution graphs: five for each of the readiness for change domains and one for the overall readiness for change score. The percentage of respondents is plotted on the y-axis. The x-axis represents the 7 point scale, ranging from ‘Strongly Disagree’ to ‘Strongly Agree.’ Note that each domain refers to the average response given to multiple questions in the survey. Higher scores on the x-axis indicate stronger agreement with statements within that domain, implying more readiness for change.

The graphs show that the greatest concentration of respondents is at the higher end of the scale in each domain. The graphs representing discrepancy, appropriateness, and efficacy show similar patterns. They are characterised by a sharp rise in the percentage of respondents from the midpoint onwards with the curve falling as it approaches very strong agreement. Thus, a high percentage of staff members agreed with the statements presented in these domains. The distributions for the three other readiness for change measures of principal support, valence, and overall readiness for change are more varied. In other words, the results were spread out, rather than being clustered around one particular score illustrating that respondents were not as unified in their ratings of these domains.

It is important to establish whether these measures are normally distributed as this determines the statistical methods used for subsequent comparison and correlation testing. The graphs show that only the valence curve has any resemblance to the symmetrical, bell-shaped normal distribution. Nonetheless, the skewness and kurtosis test was applied to all measures to test for evidence of normality in all domains. Results indicate that all six domains are non-normal, therefore non-parametric analyses were used in all tests related to the OCBRS.

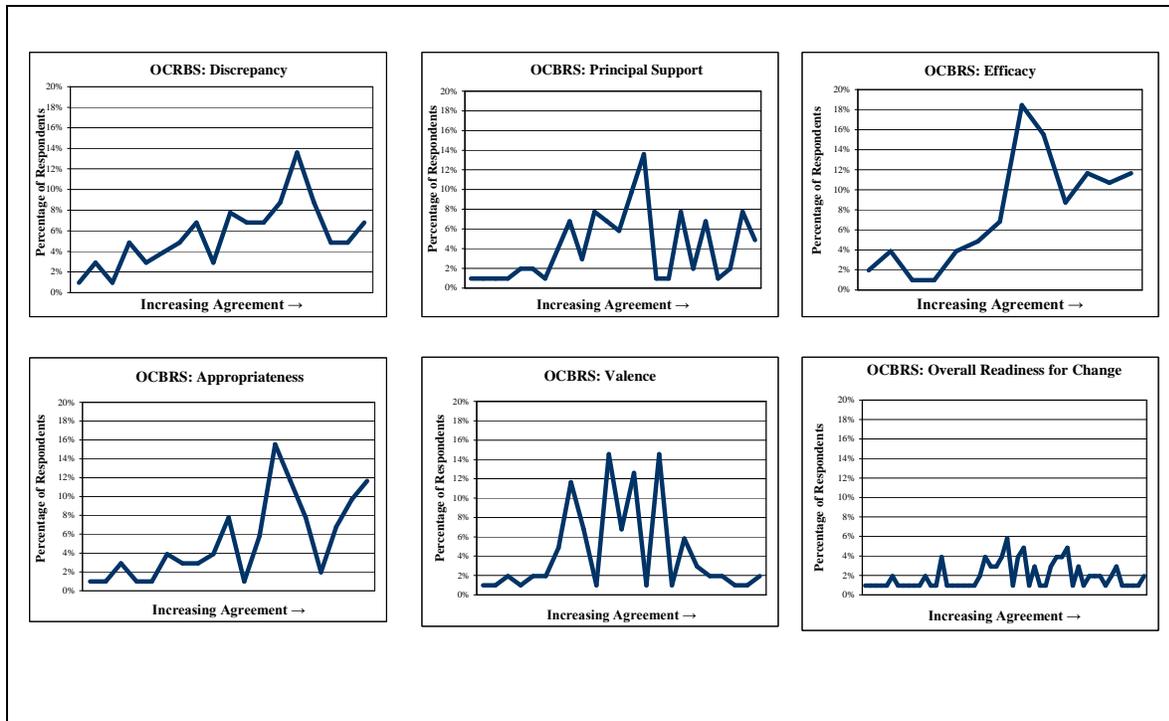


Figure 3. Variation of subdomains on the OCRBS.

c) Work Environment

A key factor which may influence an organisation's readiness for change is the type of work environment operating at the centre. Table 2 reports the average ratings for each of the nine work environment domains. Overall, staff of the ECCECs in the *PFL* catchment area rated all domains related to their work environment positively. The domains receiving the highest ratings were *collegiality* or the degree to which centre staff interact and support one another, *supervisor support* which represents the supportiveness and helpfulness of staff supervision, and *task orientation* or the importance the centre places on good planning, efficiency, and getting the job done. *Goal consensus* which is described as the amount of agreement on school philosophies, *innovativeness* which represents the degree to which staff are encouraged to be creative and innovative in their work, and *physical setting* or the degree to which the setting is sufficient and organised, received ratings in the middle. Finally, the lowest ratings were on *decision making* which is representative of the freedom that staff have to make decisions directly related to them, *clarity* of the centre policies, procedures, and responsibilities, and *professional growth* or the degree to which the centre provides opportunities for professional growth of the staff. The lowest mean score (professional growth) was 5.1 on a scale ranging from 0-10, indicating that staff were happy in general with their work environment.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics of the Early Childhood Work Environment Survey domains

Domain	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Collegiality	104	7.51	2.29	0	10
Professional Growth	104	5.14	2.67	0	10
Supervisor Support	104	7.49	2.00	0	10
Clarity	104	5.94	2.59	0	10
Decision Making	104	6.52	2.19	0	10
Goal Consensus	104	7.24	2.31	2	10
Task Orientation	104	7.44	2.09	1	10
Physical Setting	104	6.79	2.44	1	10
Innovativeness	104	7.07	1.92	2	10

In the work environment section of the survey, the respondents were asked to read ten statements related to each of the nine work environment categories and check all the boxes that applied to their centre. Of these nine categories, seven contained both positive and negative statements related to the work environment, while the remaining two categories, professional growth and clarity, contained only positive items and therefore are not included in Figure 4. Figure 4 depicts the number of respondents who agreed with one or more positive statement(s), as well as the number of respondents who agreed with one or more negative statement(s), about their centre.

As illustrated in the graphs, more positive items than negative items were chosen for all domains. This is consistent with the high mean scores for each domain presented in Table 2. Although all domains had a very high frequency of positive items selected, the amount of negative items chosen varied depending on the domain. For example, few respondents selected negative items in relation to the *supervisor support* domain, but several respondents selected at least one negative item on the *physical setting* domain.

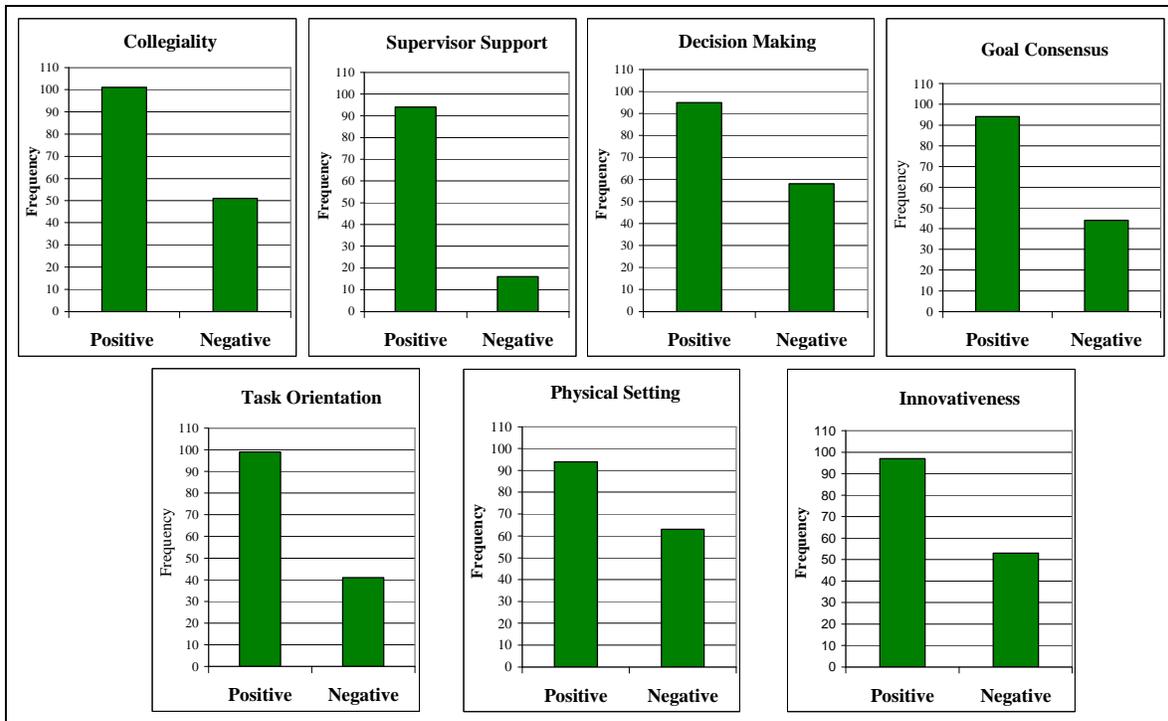


Figure 4. Frequencies of positive and negative valenced items for domains on the Early Childhood Work Environment Survey

Figure 5 below illustrates self-assessed influence in workplace decisions. The graph compares the respondents' current level of influence to their desired level of influence. These values represent the averages for all respondents. To establish whether the differences between current and desired level of influence are statistically significant, Wilcoxon rank-sum tests and t-tests were applied. The Wilcoxon rank-sum test was used for all domains with non-normal distributions (*ordering materials*, *interviewing*, and *programme objectives*). The *training* and *planning* domains were normally distributed and therefore a t-test was used to identify any significant differences.

The resulting p-values, depicted in Figure 5, indicate that staff members wish to have more influence on the following aspects of their centre's organisation: *ordering materials*, *interviewing potential staff members*, *determining programme objectives*, and *training opportunities*. Differences between staff members' current and desired influence in the domain of planning did not reach statistical significance suggesting that staff are satisfied with their current level of influence in terms of planning decisions made in their centre. The results suggest that while staff rate their work environment positively, there are still some areas in which they would like more influence in decision-making.

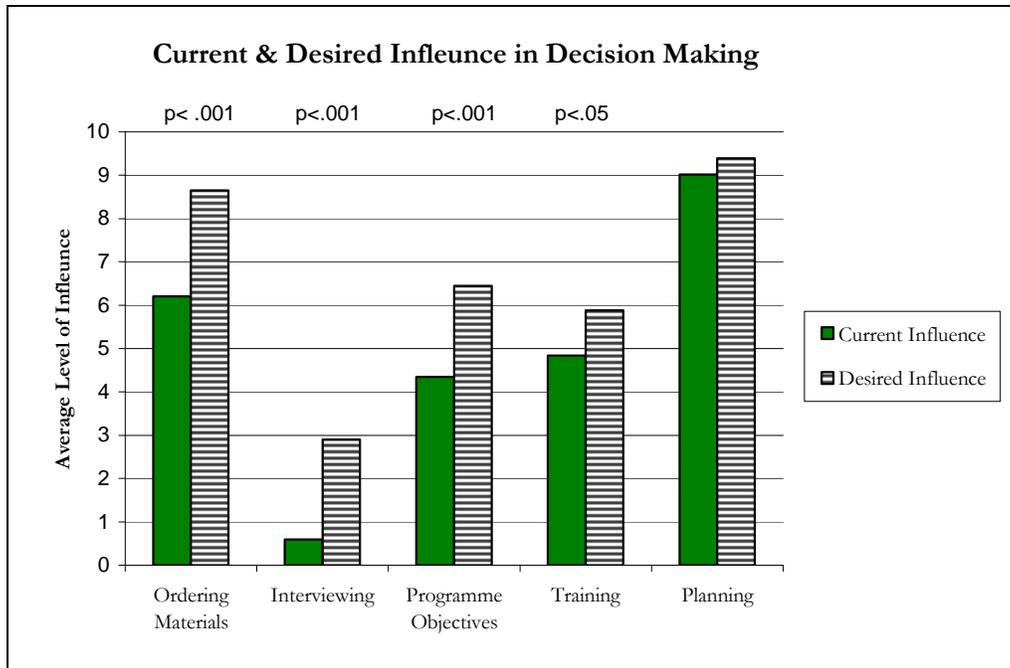


Figure 5. Differences between staff reported current and desired influence in various decisions related to centre practices.

d) Job Satisfaction

Table 3 reports the average ratings for several aspects of job satisfaction. All scores were in the 5–7 range, which is high given that the highest possible score is 7. This implies that the majority of respondents felt positively about their jobs.

Global Job Satisfaction measures how satisfied staff are with their jobs on the whole. The average score was 6.28 which lies between ‘satisfied’ (6) and ‘very satisfied’ (7). Figure 6, which depicts the distribution of responses for global job satisfaction, shows that 93.81% of respondents were satisfied, to some degree, with their job.

Satisfaction with more specific aspects of their job was determined using the Job Satisfaction Survey (Andrews & Withey, 1976). Table 3 shows that respondents reported that they felt happiest with the *work*, the *colleagues*, and the *job* itself. These scores corresponded to an average response between ‘pleased’ (6) and ‘delighted’ (7). The *employment setting* and *available resources* were rated lowest by respondents. However, these values were still in the high range of 5 – 6 where 5 represents a ‘mostly satisfied’ response.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics for indices of job satisfaction

Domain	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Global Job Satisfaction	97	6.28	0.93	2	7
Job (JSS)	103	6.18	1.02	4	7
Colleagues (JSS)	103	6.28	0.93	3	7
Work (JSS)	103	6.30	0.70	4	7
Employment Setting (JSS)	102	5.90	1.01	2	7
Available Resources (JSS)	102	5.77	1.23	1	7

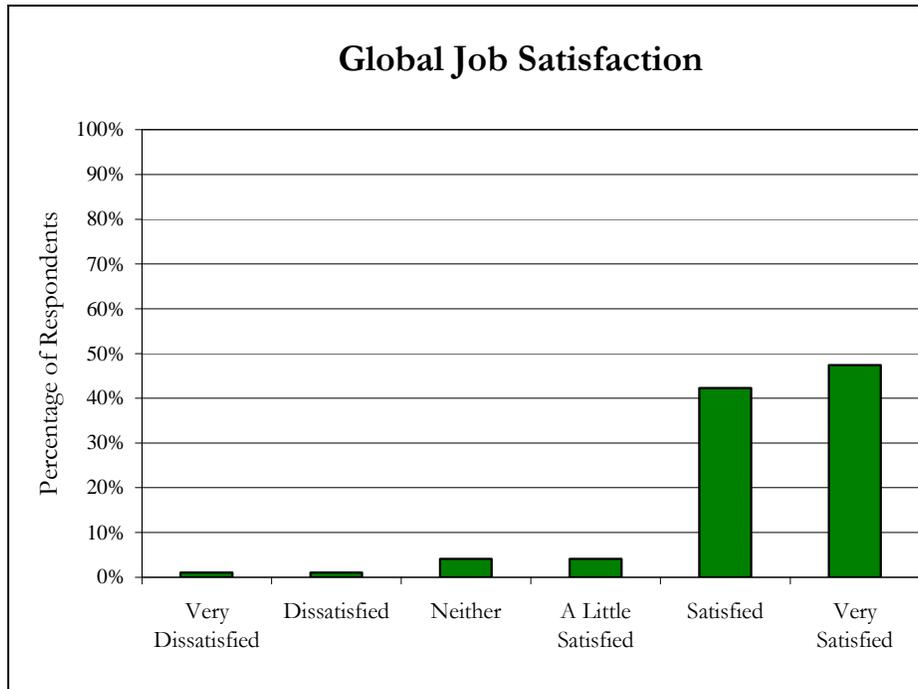


Figure 6. Percentage of responses to each response option related to global job satisfaction.

Figure 7 below indicates that the majority of respondents were happy with every aspect of their job. The values on the x-axis represent how satisfied staff were with various aspects of their job and the values on the y-axis denote the percentage of respondents who felt that way. Note that responses ranged from ‘Terrible’ to ‘Delighted.’ For all five measures, 88–99 percent of staff felt either ‘delighted,’ ‘pleased,’ or ‘mostly satisfied’ with each aspect of their job. This is consistent with Figure 6 which shows that approximately 94 percent of respondents felt satisfied, to some extent, with their job in general.

The highest number of ‘delighted’ responses resulted from questions about how respondents felt about their job and how they felt about the people they work with. There were no ‘unhappy’ or ‘terrible’ responses for the job, colleagues, or work categories on this measure. Furthermore, only two respondents felt dissatisfied to some extent with the physical setting and just three respondents indicated that they felt ‘unhappy’ or ‘terrible’ about the resources available in their centre. Therefore,

based on these results, it appears that the vast majority of staff at the ECCECs were very satisfied with multiple aspects of their employment situation.

Figure 7 also shows the variation in responses to the job satisfaction questions. They show that the employment setting and available resources categories have the largest variance. In other words, there is more variability in staff ratings of these scales. Therefore, although the average scores in these categories were high, there were some respondents who were dissatisfied with these aspects of their work. The job, work, and colleagues categories, on the other hand, exhibit less variance. In these domains, around 50% of respondents indicated that they were ‘delighted’ with their job, work, and colleagues, followed by approximately 30% who indicated they were ‘pleased,’ and the remaining respondents who indicated that they were ‘mostly satisfied’ or have ‘mixed’ feelings about their work and colleagues. This implies that, on the whole, staff were unified in their positive rating of the work they do and the people they work with.

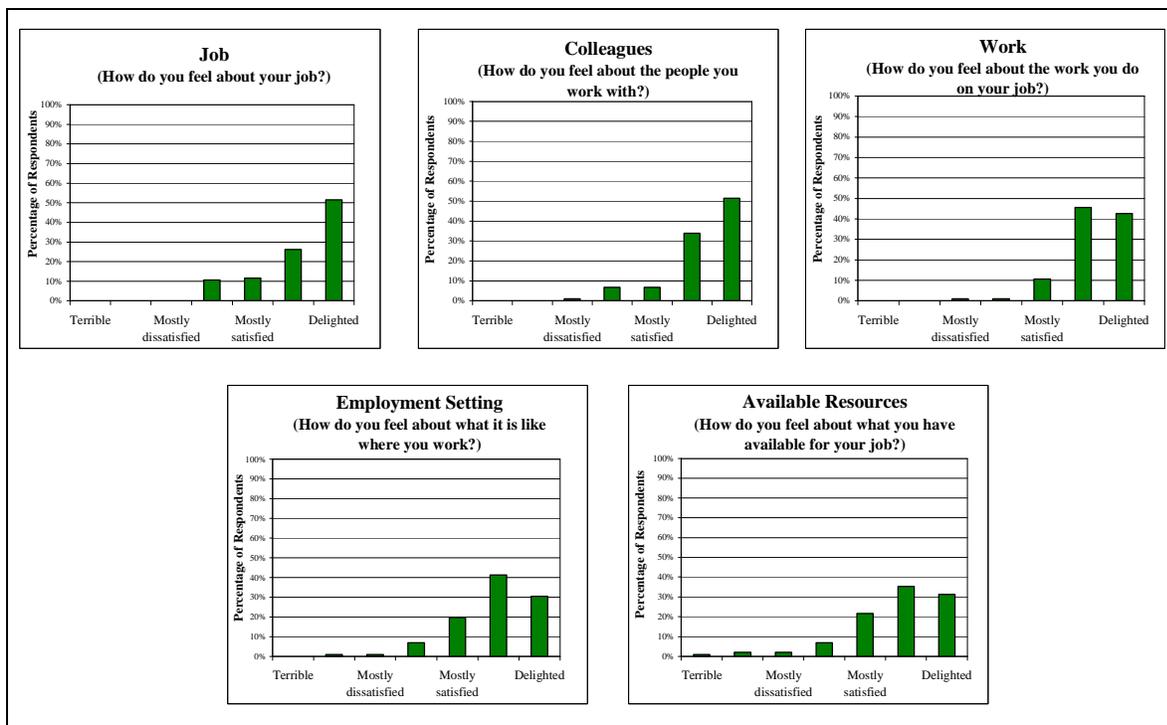


Figure 7. Percentage of responses for each category of the Job Satisfaction Scale (Andrews & Withey, 1976)

e) Relationship between OCRBS, Individual Characteristics, Work Environment, and Job Satisfaction

Organisational change theory suggests that readiness for change may be influenced by the type of workplace where the change is occurring and staff satisfaction with their job. This section therefore reports the Spearman Rho non-parametric correlations between each of the Organisational Change Recipients’ Belief Scale (OCRBS) domains and (1) individual characteristics of centre staff, (2) staff perceptions of work environment, and (3) staff reported job satisfaction. Table 4 shows that the majority of staff characteristics are not associated with perceived readiness for change. However, several significant associations emerged between the OCRBS domains and factors relating to the job itself. In particular, there is a negative correlation between working conditions and the readiness for

change domain of discrepancy and there is a positive correlation between the readiness for change domain of principal support and a satisfaction with the working environment. Additionally, multiple OCRBS domains are correlated with job satisfaction. It is important to note, however, that although several significant relationships emerged, the all of the correlations are weak (between 0.2-0.4). All significant relationships are discussed in detail below.

(1) OCRBS: Discrepancy

Discrepancy measures how strongly respondents believe that a change is needed in their workplace. No significant relationships emerged between discrepancy and the individual characteristics of the respondents. Given that this measure is specifically linked to the centre itself, it is plausible that the individual characteristics of the staff may not play a role in recognising the need for the change. However, there is a negative correlation between discrepancy and seven of the nine work environment categories. Specifically there are negative relationships between discrepancy and collegiality, supervisor support, decision making, goal consensus, task orientation, physical setting, and innovativeness. The negative correlation between discrepancy and these work environment factors suggests that people who were happy with their work environment were less likely to believe that the Síolta change was necessary for their centre.

Several relationships also emerged between the discrepancy domain of the OCBRS and various aspects of job satisfaction. Specifically, the discrepancy domain is negatively associated with global job satisfaction and there are trends to suggest negative relationships between the discrepancy domain and the employment setting and available resources. Together, these findings suggest that staff who had higher levels of job satisfaction were less likely to indicate that the change was needed in their early childcare and education setting.

(2) OCRBS: Appropriateness

Appropriateness refers to the necessity or appropriateness of the change for the organisation. The perceived appropriateness of the Síolta framework is not significantly related to any of the individual characteristics. As in the discrepancy domain, this could reflect the fact that the question is strongly centre based and, therefore, only work related variables should be expected to play a role.

With respect to knowledge about the Síolta framework, there is a trend which suggests those who felt well informed about what the transition involved, believed that the framework was appropriate for their centre. This finding is important as providing staff with knowledge about the Síolta framework may play a fundamental role in the implementation of the change. This is an important finding for professionals involved in assisting ECCECs implement the Síolta framework.

Unlike the discrepancy measure, there are few correlations between the quality of the working environment and the perceived appropriateness of the change. Professional growth was the only category that was significantly correlated with this domain. This positive correlation indicates that those who received more career development opportunities in their workplace felt that the Síolta framework was more appropriate for their centre.

In regards job satisfaction, two categories are positively associated with appropriateness. Specifically, the job itself and the work one does on the job are positively correlated with the appropriateness domain. Additionally, trends suggest positive relationships between the appropriateness domain of the OCBRS and global job satisfaction and the employment setting. This implies that the more

satisfied the respondent was with his/her overall job, the work he/she did on the job, and his/her physical surrounding, the more he/she believed that the introduction of the Síolta framework was appropriate for the centre. Overall, these findings indicate that staff who were happy with their job believed the change was appropriate for their centre.

(3) OCRBS: Efficacy

The efficacy domain measures how confident staff members are that they can implement the change successfully. Again, the individual characteristics of the early childcare staff are not statistically associated with efficacy. A positive relationship is found between the respondents' level of knowledge about the Síolta framework and efficacy beliefs. This demonstrates that the more staff knew about the Síolta framework, the more likely they were to believe that their centre would be successful at implementing the change. This may be explained as those who knew little about the Síolta framework, may not have known what to expect in the transition process and therefore may not have been confident that their centre could meet the Síolta standards. This further illustrates that knowledge about the Síolta framework increases the staff's sense of confidence that their centre can successfully implement the necessary changes. This finding is especially important as informing staff about the Síolta framework and what the process entails, may be key to ensuring the successful adoption of the Síolta standards.

There is also evidence that efficacy is related to work-specific factors. Results show that those who were happy with their work environment were confident that their centre would be successful at implementing the Síolta framework. Specifically, professional growth and clarity are significantly and positively related to the efficacy domain. Trends also show positive relationships between decision making and goal consensus and the OCBRS domain of efficacy. Thus, giving staff more opportunities for personal development, making centre policies, procedures, and responsibilities clear, giving staff freedom to make decisions directly related to them, and maintaining agreement on school philosophies was associated with higher perceptions that the centre would be successful at implementing the Síolta framework.

Job satisfaction is also associated with higher perceptions of efficacy. The results show that staff that were happier with their current job, their colleagues, and the work they do on their job had a stronger belief that the organisational change could be successfully implemented in their centre. One possible explanation for this finding is that staff who are less satisfied with their current role and the work they do on a daily basis are likely to feel less enthusiastic about the proposed change and, therefore, less confident of their centre's ability to successfully implement the change.

(4) OCRBS: Principal Support

Principal support represents the strength with which staff members believe that the implementation of the Síolta framework will be well supported by management and colleagues. Trends show a negative relationship between principal support and the number of years of experience in the early childhood setting. This suggests that staff who had been working in the centre for a greater number of years felt that the supportiveness and helpfulness of staff supervision was not as good as those who had been working in the centre for a shorter period of time. This, perhaps, points to a certain level of disillusionment that may be evident with more years of experience in the ECCEC.

All work environment factors and job satisfaction measures are positively correlated with the principal support measure. Therefore, staff who perceive that the centre staff interact well and

support one another, that the centre provides opportunities for professional growth, that the staff and supervisor support in the centre is helpful, that centre policies, procedures, and responsibilities are clearly described and achieved, that staff have the freedom to make decisions related to themselves, that there is agreement on school philosophies, that there is importance placed on good planning and efficiency, that the setting is sufficient and organised, and that staff are encouraged to be creative in their work, is related to higher ratings of support provided by managers in the centre. Furthermore, the more satisfied staff were with their job, their colleagues, the work they do on the job, the employment setting, and the available resources in the setting the higher they rated the support they receive from management in the ECCEC.

(5) OCBRS: Valence

Valence measures the perceived level of benefit for the centre that will result from the introduction of the Síolta framework. This domain of the OCBRS is negatively correlated with the respondents' level of education suggesting that respondents with higher levels of education perceived the outcome associated with the Síolta framework to be less appealing than those with lower levels of education. It is important to note that the items for this domain are particularly individual, rather than centre, focused (i.e., "This change will benefit me," "I will earn higher pay from my job after this change"). Those with more education may feel that their qualifications are more beneficial than work experience or the operations of the centre itself, while those with lower education may assign more importance to working under a well-recognised Síolta framework.

In terms of the work environment factors, a negative relationship is present between innovativeness and the OCBRS domain of valence, suggesting that staff who felt that they were encouraged to be creative in their work perceived the outcome associated with implementing the Síolta framework to be less appealing. Additionally, trends suggest a positive relationship between supervisor support and valence, illustrating that respondents who felt that their supervision was helpful and supportive were more likely to perceive a positive outcome associated with the proposed implementation of the Síolta framework in their ECCEC.

The valence domain is positively related to respondents' satisfaction with the job itself and the available resources on the job. This suggests that those who reported being happier with their job and resources were more likely to place a favourable outcome on the proposed introduction of the Síolta framework.

(6) Overall Readiness for Change

The overall readiness for change score is derived as an average of all 24-items on the OCBRS. The correlations show that readiness for change is not associated with any of the staff characteristics. This may result as the majority of the readiness for change domains are related to the centre itself rather than the respondent. Of the work environment factors, only professional growth is correlated with the overall readiness for change domain at a trend ($p < .10$) level, suggesting that respondents who felt that their centre provided opportunities for professional growth were more ready for the proposed change.

The majority of job satisfaction categories are significantly related to overall readiness for change as measured by the OCBRS. Specifically, the job itself, the work the respondent does on the job, and the available resources in the workplace are all significantly related to overall readiness for change. Trends also suggest a positive relationship between satisfaction with colleagues and the employment

setting and overall readiness for change. Together, these findings suggest that the more satisfied staff were with various aspect of their work environment, the more ready they were for the organisational change.

Table 4

Correlation coefficients between OCBRS scales and individual characteristics, work environment factors, and job satisfaction

	Discrepancy	Appropriateness	Efficacy	Principal Support	Valence	Overall
Individual Characteristics						
Age	-0.03	0.11	0.14	0.08	0.05	0.09
Education	0.00	-0.13	0.04	-0.16	-0.25*	-0.14
Years in Early Childhood	0.09	-0.04	0.03	-0.16 [†]	-0.05	-0.03
Years in Centre	0.07	0.02	0.11	-0.10	-0.07	0.02
Years in Current Role	0.04	0.04	0.13	-0.16	-0.06	-0.02
Síolta Knowledge	0.14	0.19[†]	0.24*	0.02	0.08	0.13
Work Environment Factors						
Collegiality	-0.36***	0.02	0.14	0.22*	-0.07	-0.02
Professional Growth	-0.10	0.20*	0.20*	0.40***	0.02	0.18 [†]
Supervisor Support	-0.25**	0.08	0.12	0.43***	0.13	0.12
Clarity	-0.16	0.13	0.22*	0.33***	0.17 [†]	0.14
Decision Making	-0.20*	0.08	0.18 [†]	0.40***	0.15	0.16
Goal Consensus	-0.32**	0.06	0.18 [†]	0.39***	0.02	0.08
Task Orientation	-0.44***	-0.03	-0.01	0.31***	-0.10	-0.06
Physical Setting	-0.38***	0.00	0.07	0.24*	0.02	-0.04
Innovativeness	-0.39***	0.03	0.16	0.27**	-0.21*	-0.04
Job Satisfaction						
Global Job Satisfaction	-0.24*	0.18 [†]	0.09	0.36***	0.07	0.14
Job (JSS)	-0.04	0.29**	0.25*	0.34***	0.34***	0.33***
Colleagues (JSS)	-0.10	0.12	0.20*	0.27**	0.07	0.17 [†]
Work (JSS)	0.03	0.32**	0.36***	0.25*	0.22*	0.30**
Employment Setting (JSS)	-0.17 [†]	0.19 [†]	0.15	0.45***	0.07	0.18 [†]
Available Resources (JSS)	-0.18 [†]	0.15	0.15	0.43***	0.20*	0.20*

[†] $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

VI. Conclusion

This report completes the examination of the baseline data collected as part of the implementation of the Síolta framework. The staff in the early childhood care and education centres (ECCEC) of the PFL catchment area were surveyed and their thoughts on the introduction of the Síolta framework were analysed in relation to their personal characteristics, perceived work environment, and job satisfaction. This study serves as a foundation for further research that will be conducted when each centre has completed the Síolta process. The next report will link the baseline measures described here to the quality level achieved by each of the ECCECs participating in the implementation of the Síolta framework.

This current report links staff perceptions of change and attitudes toward the Síolta framework to the quality of the work environment and the level of job satisfaction experienced by the staff working at ECCECs. The introduction of the Síolta framework is complex and may represent a significant change in the current practices of some of the ECCECs. Therefore, the implementation of this framework represents an organisational change, thus organisational change theory serves as the theoretical foundation for the report. It examines the factors that may underlie the successful implementation of this change by assessing the organisational and contextual factors that have been identified as being important influences on employee acceptance of change within an organisation.

The first area of interest concerns the amount of knowledge which the ECCEC staff felt they possessed in regard the Síolta framework. Very few staff indicated that they knew a large amount about the Síolta framework and the highest number of staff (41%) indicated that they knew a little bit about the framework. It is important to note that the survey was administered after the ECCEC had indicated they wanted to engage with the Síolta framework, but before the developmental work associated with the framework began. Due to the timing of the survey, it is not surprising that few respondents indicated that they knew a great deal about the Síolta framework. Yet it is interesting that 25% of respondents indicated that they did not know very much about the framework and a further 2% indicated that they knew nothing about the framework. Correlations showed that greater knowledge about the Síolta framework was associated with greater agreement that the introduction of this framework was appropriate for the centre as well as greater agreement that the centre had the capacity to implement the proposed change. Ensuring that staff are aware of the upcoming change, the reasons for the change, and about the Síolta framework in general, may prove to be beneficial for the uptake and implementation of the framework at a national level. Other research, in which focus group methods were used to examine attitudes toward change, found that although teachers agreed with the proposed change, they felt that there were not enough resources or training to implement the change (Walsh & Gardner, 2006). Therefore, it is important to ensure that staff are aware of the change and feel confident that they will be supported in the change. Furthermore, although staff did not indicate a high level of knowledge regarding the Síolta framework, the vast majority (89%) indicated that their centre would be successful at implementing the Síolta standards. Therefore, while staff may not have known all the details of the framework itself, they did believe that their centre, as a whole, would be successful at implementing the Síolta framework.

As this study is grounded in organisational change theory, the Organisational Change Recipients' Belief Scale (OCBRS) served as the key measurement tool. This instrument assesses respondents' readiness for change on various domains including *discrepancy*, *appropriateness*, *efficacy*, *principal support*, *valence*, and *overall readiness for change*. Overall, staff of the ECCECs indicated that they were ready for the change. They agreed, to some degree, that the need for the change was present within their centre, that the change was appropriate for their centre, and that their centre had the capacity to implement the change. They also agreed that the management in the centre supported the implementation of the Síolta framework, and that the change would have a positive outcome. These findings are important as the success of such a change in the practices of an ECCEC may depend on how the staff perceive the change, its appropriateness, and management support provided during the transition. Armenakis et al. (2007) refer to the discrepancy domain, or the agreement that the change is needed, as the "burning platform" or the sense of urgency that is needed for organizational change to be considered. It is therefore significant that, on average, the sample 'agreed a little' with the notion that the need for change in the centre is present. This is an important finding as agreement among staff members that the change is needed may be a crucial factor in the successful implementation of the Síolta framework.

The survey also measured respondents' beliefs about their work environment in terms of *collegiality, professional growth, supervisor support, clarity, decision making, goal consensus, task orientation, physical setting, and innovativeness*. Overall, staff were pleased with their current work environment as indicated by a high *global job satisfaction* rating and the positive scores that were identified for the majority of the work environment domains (i.e., collegiality, supervisor support, decision making, goal consensus, task orientation, physical setting, and innovativeness).

In effect, respondents indicated more positive items associated with the degree to which centre staff support and interact with one another, the supportiveness or helpfulness of staff supervision, the freedom that staff have to make decisions related to them, the amount of agreement on school philosophies, the importance placed on good planning, the organisation of the setting, and the degree to which staff are encouraged to be creative in their work. This suggests that, on the whole, staff perceived their work environment positively. Furthermore, although the professional growth and clarity categories contained only positive items, staff also indicated that they were happy with the opportunities for professional growth in the organisation and the clarity of the organisation's goals.

Another significant finding related to the work environment is the discrepancy between self rated *current influence* on centre decisions and self rated *desired influence* on the same centre related decisions. On the whole, staff indicated that they would like to have more influence in making decisions related to ordering materials, interviewing, determining programme objectives, and training. Therefore, although staff appeared to be happy with their work environment, the significant discrepancy between the current and desired level of influence in decisions making within the ECCEC suggests that there were some potential areas of improvement which the Síolta framework could address. This finding is in line with other research that has identified teachers' desire to be involved in the process of an organisational change and for their ideas to be taken into consideration (Walsh & Gardner, 2006). This may have important consequences for the implementation of the framework which represents a major change in the daily practices for some centres. Staff indicated that they would like to have more influence in basic centre decisions, including those related to programme objectives. Including staff in the decision to implement the Síolta framework may prove beneficial for the implementation of the framework across Ireland as staff involvement in such decisions may ease the transition of recognising areas of strength while simultaneously identifying areas in need of improvement and ultimately meeting the Síolta standards within the centre.

There was also a high level of job satisfaction among the staff working in the local ECCECs, with 94% of respondents indicating that they were at least a little satisfied with their current role in the centre. Furthermore, staff indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the *work* they do on their job, followed by their *colleagues*, the *job* itself, the *employment setting*, and the *available resources* at the centre. Note that although satisfaction with resources on the job received the lowest rating by respondents, the rating was still relatively high, as staff indicated that they are mostly 'pleased' with the resources available to them.

In order to assess the key factors which may influence the successful implementation of the Síolta framework, the relationships between individual characteristics, work environment, job satisfaction, and readiness for change were examined. Results show that the staffs' readiness for change beliefs were more related to the quality of the work environment and job satisfaction than their own individual characteristics.

In terms of staff characteristics, few significant relationships emerged. An exception was found for educational attainment, where a significant relationship was found in relation to valence or the appeal of the perceived outcome associated with the introduction of the Síolta framework. Interestingly, this negative relationship suggests that the higher educated staff are less likely to agree that the proposed change will be associated with a positive outcome. One plausible explanation for this may be related to the measurement of the valence domain. This domain includes items relating to direct, individual gains from the change rather than centre gains. For example, items focus on benefits such as ‘increased pay for the individual’ rather than the increased standards of the centre itself. Individuals with higher levels of education may feel that they themselves will not directly benefit from the change, but yet the centre as a whole may benefit. Each of the readiness for change domains are assessed at a centre, rather than an individual level, and the implementation and developmental work of the Síolta framework is conducted at a centre level. Therefore, given the construction of this measure, as well as the focus of the Síolta framework, individual characteristics may not play a substantial role in the implementation of the framework and this may provide a possible explanation as to why no significant relationships emerge between the discrepancy, appropriateness, efficacy, and overall readiness for change domains and individual characteristics of respondents. Previous reports assessing readiness for change among teachers found that teachers felt that the change had to be embraced by the school (Walsh & Gardner, 2006), further suggesting that individual characteristics may be less important than group or centre characteristics throughout the process of an organisational change.

Although few significant relationships were found between the OCBRS domains and individual characteristics of centre staff, several small to moderate significant correlations emerged between the readiness for change domains and work specific factors. Specifically, a negative correlation between discrepancy and work-related variables was observed, suggesting that respondents who rated their work environment highly, were less likely to believe that the implementation of the Síolta framework was needed. The work environment factors were consistently and positively related to principal support, suggesting that individuals who rated their work environment highly were more likely to believe that management and colleagues in the ECCEC were dedicated to making the change work. It is important to consider these findings together as they suggest that although staff who rated the work environment positively may not have felt that the change was needed, they did believe that they would be supported in the change and that the centre would be committed to successfully implementing and meeting the Síolta standards.

Several significant relationships were observed between job satisfaction and readiness for change. Although there were no consistent relationships among these variables, satisfaction with the job itself and satisfaction with the work the respondent does on the job were associated with appropriateness, efficacy, principal support, valence, and overall readiness for change. For the most part, these relationships were positive such that higher satisfaction was associated with higher agreement that the change was appropriate for the centre, that the organisation had the capacity to implement the change, that staff would be supported in and committed to the change, that there are positive outcomes associated with the implementation of the Síolta framework, and overall readiness for change. Furthermore, all categories related to job satisfaction were positively related to principal support, suggesting that those that were satisfied with their job were more likely to agree that they would be supported in the introduction of the Síolta framework and that centre staff were committed to this change. This further highlights the importance of principal support for an organisational change.

It is important to view these correlations in conjunction with the descriptive statistics presented in Section V of this report. For example, the results show that although there was a strong belief of discrepancy, in regards the need for the change, among staff members (average score representing 'agree a little'), this sense of urgency actually decreased with improved working conditions and job satisfaction. A possible explanation for this is that negative sentiments could be attached to some of the discrepancy domain items, such as "we need to improve the way we operate in this organisation." Those that believed they were already doing a good job may have been less likely to agree with such statements. Although the "burning platform" is likely to be more developed in ECCECs where staff are unfulfilled, the four remaining beliefs suggest that support for the change was associated with employees that were happy in their jobs. Perhaps the discrepancy belief is not the foundation necessary for staff to support the transition, as Armenakis et al. (2007) suggest, but rather a complimentary idea. Furthermore, the results suggest that staff who felt that organisational change was unnecessary in their centre may, at the same time, have been happy with the transition proposed and felt that they would have adequate support throughout the change process.

The report has several strengths and limitations. The first strength is the high level of participation among the ECCEC staff in the study, suggesting that staff are willing to engage in this process and provide useful feedback about the new framework. Second, the main instruments used in the study presented high reliabilities and are well-documented in the literature related to organisational change and job satisfaction. Although several interesting findings related to perceptions and beliefs about the implementation of the Síolta framework are reported, several limitations are present. First, the small nature of the sample has implications from a statistical point of view both in the current report and in the second report which will link the outcome of the Síolta framework to the baseline beliefs and perceptions presented here. Traditional econometric methods, which control for potential confounding factors, work under the assumption of large sample sizes and therefore could not be implemented in this work. The analyses in this study are therefore limited to correlation analyses. These correlations are indicative of underlying relationships that may exist between two factors, however they are not necessarily causal relationships, nor should they be interpreted as such. The analysis is based on a small sample as only ECCECs in the *PFL* catchment area were surveyed and, furthermore, only the staff members that were working directly with children are included. The constraint tied to a small sample size is reduced variation in the responses recorded for each question. This, in turn, makes it more difficult to find definite trends in the data. Additionally, within-centre analysis becomes difficult as separating the results for each ECCEC would make them potentially identifiable, thus breaching confidentiality. It is important to note, however, that the average scores across all readiness for change measures were similar for each centre and therefore, it was deemed appropriate to run the analysis across the entire sample of ECCECs.

The Síolta framework is the first nationally agreed upon set of quality standards for early childcare and education settings in Ireland. The goal of this framework is to improve the standards for best practices in early childcare for children aged zero to six. As each child in the *Preparing for Life* programme will be provided with access to a preschool place in the year prior to school entry, it is critical that these places are of a high quality to ensure optimal child development. *PFL* therefore wish to determine the overall quality improvements in the preschools, and to examine the factors that influence the success or non-success of the Síolta framework. By identifying factors that may facilitate the successful implementation of the Síolta framework during this pilot phase, future attempts to implement the framework in other areas in Ireland can be informed by the findings of this study. Thus, insight into the policies that ensure the successful implementation of the Síolta framework will result in higher quality pre-school care and education centres in Ireland.

VII. References

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