

Policification of Early Childhood Education and Care

The third volume in the Early Childhood Education in the 21st Century: International Teaching, Family and Policy Perspectives miniseries focuses on research highlights and policy aspects of early childhood education and care from 22 different countries around the world.

This volume provides a platform for authors to discuss and debate the implications of research findings on current practices that reflect policies of each country. The research presented spans from challenges in teacher training to case studies of family practices around early child development to problematise the key components of teacher education and family practices that impact young children's education and care. By problematising the key issues, chapter authors discuss the shifting paradigm of early childhood education and the importance of future research in informing these changes.

Offering key policy and practice insights across 19 different countries, this book is a must-read for early childhood educators, researchers, early childhood organisations, policy makers and those interested to know more about early childhood within an international perspective.

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Policification of Early Childhood Education and Care

Early Childhood Education in the
21st Century Volume III

**Edited by Susanne Garvis and
Sivanes Phillipson**

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Preface

This book is the third and final volume in the miniseries *Early Childhood Education and Care in the 21st Century*. The first book provided an overview of 19 countries' perspectives on early childhood education and care. The second volume extended the perspectives of the 19 countries with a specific focus on teachers' and families' contribution in early childhood education and care. In this final volume, we explore practice and policy in the 19 countries with key components of teacher education and family practices that impact early learning and care.

We would like to thank a number of people involved in the production of this final book. First, we would like to thank all of the contributing authors who shared important insider perspectives of their own country around early childhood education. The countries represented are diverse and allow much reflection by the reader.

Next, we would like to thank both internal and external reviewers from all of the countries in this book who acted in the peer reviewer process. The reviews allowed constructive feedback for all chapters. We would like to note our sincere and heartfelt appreciation to the following external reviews for their time and effort: Helena Bergstrom, Linnea Boden, Sofia Frakenberg, Anette Hellman, Tarja Karlsson Häikiö, Lisbeth Kitson, Alicja Renata Sadownik, Tina Yngvesson and Yan Zhang. We would also like to thank Gerarda Richards for her editorial assistance with this miniseries project.

Finally, we would also like to thank the readers of the volumes for taking an active interest in early childhood education and care. Through reading and reflecting across the different countries, advocacy for early childhood education and care can grow. Through stronger advocacy, support for the development of children learning and wellbeing becomes a central focus for communities and governments.

Last but not least, we would like to dedicate this book, the final in the miniseries to our respective brilliant partners in life, Andrew and Shane, who have listened, debated and stood by us as advocates of early childhood education and care for the 21st century.

Humbly,
Susie and Sivanés

1 Introduction to policification of early childhood education and care

Susanne Garvis and Sivanes Phillipson

Introduction

The last 20 years has seen a strong focus around the world on early childhood services to support children and their families. Many governments have invested heavily into early childhood education by creating more opportunities in early learning to provide children with the best start in life. Such provision has meant that many parents, especially mothers, have been able to return to work earlier (Conboye & Romei, 2018). In line with this progress, some governments in Europe especially have put in place further support to encourage parents to return to work as quickly as possible. Whereas in some countries such as the UK and Australia, governments have reformed welfare support and tax systems to provides incentives for parents to return to paid workforce, in some Asian countries, increasing pressure from changing society sees government paying more attention to early childhood education and services (Phillipson, Koh, & Sujuddin, 2018). These types of government investments and policy moves have meant the introduction of frameworks, curricula and legal provision for young children, with explicit and implicit implications for children's early education and care. Importantly and fortunately, the majority of decisions by these governments have been based on informed research within early childhood education and care (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2017).

In this introductory chapter, we outline the main thread of research and discussion of the 19 countries' chapters of this book. The chapters are intended to align with the key components of teaching and family practices that impact young children's education and care across the globe. Prior to this third volume, the first two volumes showed how each of the 19 countries showcased, though diverse in their status of early childhood education and care (ECEC), has a common goal of providing for the young children. What is important to remember in reading this third volume is that the 19 countries in this book represent a range of low to high economic statuses with a variety of government systems and cultures. Also, it is vital to highlight that no matter the country and cultural contexts, both teachers and families in the 19 countries share a desire to create opportunities for young children's better learning and developmental outcomes.

Outline of this book

This book focuses on research highlights of early childhood education and care from 19 countries internationally. The book provides a platform for each chapter to discuss and debate the implications of research findings on current practices that reflect policies of each country. The chapters present research that spans from challenges in teacher training to case studies and observational data of child play and family practices in relation to early child development to problematise the key components of teacher education and family practices that impact young children education and care. By problematising the key issues, chapter authors discuss the shifting paradigm of early childhood education and the importance of continuous research in informing these changes. The chapters include:

- As we have witnessed, social media dominates our lives more and more. Fittingly, the second chapter authors, Clarke and Phillipson, investigate the mentoring practices of beginning teachers using Facebook in Australia. The chapter outlines the current situation for graduates of early childhood education once they begin teaching careers with a significant lack of effective leadership and mentoring. The authors provide suggestions for future policy change to initial teacher education courses to include mentoring programmes that support future early childhood teachers.
- The context of policy in Canada is presented in Chapter 3. We learn from Richardson and Langford issues surrounding the political representation of child care policy in the lead up to the elections and how it is positioned as a ‘problem’ within the public sphere. Drawing on the theoretical foundation of ‘caring democracy’, the authors propose that all citizens have a responsibility to expand the terms of engagement with child care policies.
- Authors from Chile, Cárcamo and García-Riquelme present two debates about early childhood education and care (Chapter 4). The first debate is around the issue of quality of child care centres for all children. The second debate presented is about the issues of early literacy and the introduction of teaching practices into the preschool years. The authors suggest that quality and equity require a stronger focus in public policy to try and assist equal starting conditions for all children.
- Chapter 5 explores the political processes connected to a stronger focus on learning outcomes in Danish day care institutions. Chapter author Grumløse discusses how this focus has led to a shift in paradigms from care to learning. The shift has been predominantly influenced by international tendencies to give stronger attention to the development of academic skills. Children’s day care is shown to persist as a political and pedagogical battleground in Denmark.
- Estonian preschool education policy has supported the improvement of work conditions, qualifications and training for teachers and helped to engage families and community. Chapter 6 authors, Peterson, Õun and Ugaste, provide an overview of early childhood education policy, teacher

professionalism and family practices in Estonia. Through this overview, we learn of the efforts of Estonian teacher policy for 2014–2020 to support and develop the professionalism of teachers.

- Chapter 7 authors from Finland, Kangas, Harju-Luukkainen, Brotherus, Kuusisto and Gearon, outline the importance of play in the curriculum from the viewpoints of operational cultures and the learning environment. From observational data, the importance of the child as an active agent in learning emerges, however this may also create problems for adults who are unaware of elements of play that may be taking place.
- In Chapter 8, Kastischke and Faas reflect on current developments and challenges, especially in Germany, relating to national early childhood education systems and practices in the context of globalisation and transnational education policy. It is based on the assumption that international developments and reform movements are not adopted directly in real-world educational practice, but rather are received, adapted and implemented against a background of historically developed, culture-specific structures and contexts governing action and meaning.
- In Chapter 9, Birbili and Tsitouridou draw on their experiences as teacher educators and empirical studies from the Greek context to discuss how the lack of integrated policies weakens the teacher education continuum to educate reflective professionals. The chapter provides a historical overview of Greek early childhood education before discussing current challenges set by a centralised system and the economic crisis.
- In Chapter 10, Iceland author, Dýrfjörð raises how the early childhood profession in Iceland can regain control of the sector's educational policy. Importantly, she discusses how business-related think tanks have had a role in changing both discourses as well as the legal system surrounding preschools, especially in relation to deregulation and accountability. The chapter also presents the analysis of the development of two literacy policy documents that show how preschool teachers have been set aside in favour of experts from other disciplines. Such a move, the author laments, has led to educational policies that are driven by standardised and measurable outcomes.
- Chapter 11 author, Seo, reviews the current status of early childhood education and care services in Korea while addressing provocative issues surrounding the ramifications of ECEC policies for primary stakeholders. The move to equal starts for children began in 2012 and 2013, when a free child care policy was introduced for all children aged 0 to 5 years, regardless of family income. Around the same time, a national curriculum was also introduced. Future directions for research, practice and policy are also provided.
- In Chapter 12, the Aotearoa/New Zealand early childhood revised curriculum *Te Whāriki* is explored by Tyler-Merrick, Cherrington, McLaughlin, McLachlan, Aspden and Phillips. A specific focus is made on providing quality infant and toddler education and care, literacy and digital technologies within *Te Whāriki*. Future directions are also given to help teachers

understand the curriculum through professional learning opportunities and the research of specific teacher practices.

- The struggles over quality, play and preschool in Norway is explored in Chapter 13. Authors, Tuastad, Bjørnstad and Alvestad discuss the core elements and long-lasting controversies that are deep rooted in Norwegian historical underpinnings. Using data from various projects, the investigation shows clear links between policy and society in relation to what is best for the child. The authors conclude that Norwegian policy that focuses on both child-centrism and social investment in a united model is an important step forward.
- Staying with the theme of quality, Shiyun, Shiyun, Veraksa and Veraksa (Chapter 14) share findings from a large quality-based study of preschools in Russia. The authors compare findings with the Federal State Educational Standard and preschool teacher education to reveal areas of future development to provide optimal conditions for children's learning and development.
- In Chapter 15, Bogovac and Miškeljin discuss the current tensions and problems in initial teacher education and professional learning in Serbia. They note that there are numerous challenges with ECEC in Serbia including low coverage, inequality in access, lack of facilities and uneven geographical distribution. The authors suggest that it is necessary to initiate a change in provision of professional development by supporting alternate forms of professional development. These can involve researching teacher practice, professional networking, project development and collaborative actions.
- Authors of Chapter 16, Monk and Phillipson, problematised Singaporean in-service teachers' struggle with their own professional identity with elements of professionalisation that they were experiencing. Using visual metaphors to highlight personal, interpersonal and institutional aspects of professionalism alongside the professionalisation of the early childhood sector, the authors present an optimistic argument for the balancing act of shifting sands of ECEC in Singapore.
- Chapter 17 continues with the theme of quality by presenting three studies from various time periods in Sweden. The chapter authors, Sheridan, Garvis, Williams and Mellgren show a gap between children and teachers' perspectives and between policy intentions and the preschool practice. Critical factors are shared around quality that directly influence the professional and policy development, including aspects of learning within preschool contexts.
- In Chapter 18, Lin and Liu share insights about the new age of educare, highlighting challenges as well as the contextual support structures needed for the future of ECEC in Taiwan. The chapter reviews government policies around child care since 2000, showing the significant steps the Taiwanese government have made towards creating a better child care environment.
- Chapter 19 author, Duursma, discusses the changes in Dutch laws to strengthen the position of parents in ECEC. This includes the provision of

language requirements for educators that is aimed at increasing the quality of overall care as well as parental engagement. Educators are expected to engage parents more directly and offer opportunities for parents and educators to work together to create communities of care.

- In Chapter 20, Çetin focuses on Turkish social policies that aim to increase enrolment in early childhood education. Various reports are analysed to show the effectiveness of social policies towards improved outcomes for child development. Overall the situation in Turkey appears to be improving, however it is still below desired levels.
- In Chapter 21, editors of this volume, Phillipson and Garvis, conclude this book by synthesising the main themes found across the chapters. Using a verbatim sorting method, the main concepts synthesised are presented as what we understand as the norm of policification internationally. This final chapter submits to the reader the challenges faced in teacher practices and family engagement in the face of shifting paradigms and policies in the 21st century.

Conclusion

This final book in the Early Childhood Education in the 21st Century series is designed to share with the reader the diversity of early childhood education and care around the world, presenting 19 countries that are located in different regions – Asia Pacific, Europe, North America and South America. These countries have different ideologies and systems of governance. The ultimate aim of this third volume is for readers to engage in policification of childhood within the early childhood caucus. We hope that readers will gain some vital insights from each of these countries on how they engage with the shared issues faced within early childhood education and care. More importantly, it is hoped that readers are able to relate to the shifting paradigms debated internationally, as well as see positive ways forward in the reforms and investments of the multiple governments across the globe in the 21st century.

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teachers try to make sense of them. Perceptions of the participants in this study indicate that Facebook mentoring and professional dialogue has the potential to raise or lower the professional identity of the early childhood sector with many mentors and beginning teachers believing that it can be raised, so long as the experience is positive.

Implications for future teacher mentoring

Facebook mentoring holds considerable impact for many beginning teachers and mentors when they engage in professional dialogue. Some key aspects to consider are that Facebook is a relatively new way of mentoring and that current mentoring training practices or initial teacher education courses may not address this practice to the level that it is currently needed. Facebook mentoring will continue to influence society in our engagement and thinking. Embracing this tool as a positive method of mentoring and engaging in professional dialogue may in fact raise the professional profile of the sector and indeed retention of early childhood teachers, but this is dependent upon the users. Two main considerations for policy initiatives therefore are:

- support mentors in using good mentoring practices when they are engaging as mentors on Facebook; and
- include rigorous course content for pre-service teachers in their initial teacher education programmes so that they are able to learn how to filter through dogma and identify good mentoring practices.

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that diverse perspectives are available to citizens. Without a more expansive field of possibility for child care policy and services in Canada heading into the 2019 federal election, child care policy will remain limited to the status quo – a private (market and family) problem that occludes the necessary public financing and leadership for the wellbeing of all citizens, most importantly children and families.

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the teacher's language did not prove to be a particularly fruitful aspect of instruction in supporting vocabulary (Bowne et al., 2017). And there is a concern that teaching at early years would make preschool education too much like formal school (Mendive, Weiland, Yoshikawa, & Snow, 2016), but at the same time, the interventions programmes that have been studied in the Chilean ECEC context have shown to be effective for better results in child outcomes.

Finally, the situation of ECEC in Chile is nowadays favourable in some aspects. First and foremost, there is now significant political agreement about its importance and the need of major investment in this early stage. The improvement of the child care system and especially the increase of its coverage is clearly visible, but additional efforts to improve its quality and to gain better understanding of what children in this context need are still under discussion.

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in 2003, the national education curriculum bill was passed with a clear majority. The bill was considered as good politics, in sync with the international attention to education. At present, the political debates about the national educational curriculum have addressed the quality of the curriculum. In 2018, this emphasis resulted in a reformulation of the legislation (Law no. 554 of 29 May 2018). There seems to be a disillusionment with the ‘learning outcomes’ approach, and the ideological pendulum regarding day care seems to have swung back to a broader understanding of ‘being a child in day care’. As Jakob Sølvhøj (spokesman for The Red-Green Alliance) put it during the negotiation:

We make a clear break with the preschool and learning thinking, which until recently has been politically dominant, in favor of a childhood vision that highlights childhood as a value in itself.

(Folketingstidende [Official report of parliamentary proceedings]:

1. Behandling af lovforslag nr. L 160, 28 February 2018)

The ‘new and strengthened’ national educational curriculum (Law no. 554 of 29 May 2018) is an attempt to play down the acquisition of academic skills as the primary element of children’s day care. The goal now is to allow room for at least some elements from ‘the old day care’. In the new national educational curriculum, child-initiated play is recognised as an important part of day care activities. However, Danish day care is still organised by six areas of learning (Law no. 554 of 29 May 2018). The question remains as to how the ‘new and strengthened’ national educational curriculum will affect the everyday life of day care institutions, both the daily activities of the children and the work tasks of the pedagogues. Regardless of these changes, children’s day care persists as a political and pedagogical battleground.

Notes

- 1 Day care institutions have a long history in Denmark. In terms of legislation targeting poor people, the care of children formed part of poverty relief (Ellegaard, 2000; Grumløse, 2017). Later kindergartens based on ideas and theories of Froebel and also Montessori were established (Ellegaard, 2000). Thus, there was a wide variation in the early Danish day care institutions.
- 2 The Ministry of Family Affairs was established in 1966, and for the next two years, the country’s Minister of Family Affairs was a Social Democrat, Camma Larsen-Ledet (1915–1991). The Ministry of Family Affairs was abolished in connection with the Social Democrat Jens Otto Kragh’s transfer of power to the right-wing government in 1968. Subsequently, family policy issues were administered by the Ministry of Social Affairs. In 2004, the Ministry of Family and Consumer Affairs was established. It was abolished in 2007.
- 3 According to this: In 2014 18 per cent of the children aged 0–1 years were in day care. Some of these children were in small units with a few children in private homes. In Danish terms: “dagpleje” (Danmarks Statistik, 2015).

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childhood curriculum settings. It provides yet further opportunities for exploring the insights of play as a function of personal and social life too across a range of disciplines.

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transnational educational concepts have different effects on different educational systems and educational practices, in the context of social and cultural negotiation processes (Faas et al., 2017). It is important that this be taken into account in the context of critical reflection on educational policy developments and changes in education systems and in educational practice. Therefore, in addition to international comparative longitudinal studies, cross-cultural qualitative research focusing on the reception, assessment, implementation and transformation of international trends in national and regional practice is needed. The results of cross-cultural qualitative studies allow a much broader debate on national education systems, in terms of historical developments and normative discourses, which then better serves the complexity of international comparisons. Insights of this kind are also important for a well-considered policy design in this context; when it comes to putting transnational policies and trends in an appropriate relationship to national developments and local practice.

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looked at it ever since. That happens when you don't have the staff and time you need' (Dýrfjörð, personal communication, 15 April 2018).

While there are similarities between the two literacy policy documents, it is also clear that neoliberal attention to the technical, measurable and evidence-based aspects of early childhood are more visible in the later document. The focus has shifted from the grand narrative and the 'classic' preschool methods to using instruments that have been developed mostly by specialists from other professions, and preschools have to both ensure that teachers are licensed to carry out the tests and pay for each test taken.

Conclusion

Recent indicators of neoliberalism in early childhood education are evident. Business-related think tanks have had a hand in changing both discourses as well as the legal system surrounding preschools, particularly in the areas of deregulation and accountability. This progression is just a part of a larger and more complicated societal shift in which new social imagery based on neoliberalism has paved the road for change and established a new paradigm. Analysis of the development of two literacy policy documents indicates that preschool teachers have been set aside in favour of experts from other disciplines and this has led to educational policy being transformed from play-based to being part of the newspeak based on standardised and measurable outcomes. Finally, the ideology behind these two policy documents indicates that the actors in the second policy paper are looking to transnational agencies to justify their claims and procedures.

It is unclear if or how the early childhood profession in Iceland can regain control of the sector's educational policy. It may be too big of a fight for one profession against the rising tide of multimillion-dollar industries and transnational agencies. Early childhood professions have often taken up fights for children in the past; that is part of their history, and they can do so again. But for that to happen, the profession must first acknowledge the neoliberal shift that has already happened; they have to map it, frame it and name it, or, as Pablo Freire said, '[reflect] and [act] upon the world in order to transform it' (Freire, 1986, p. 36).

Notes

- 1 In this chapter the reference to preschools changing landscapes are written from Icelandic context.
- 2 Iceland had one collage for preschool teacher until 1996 when the education was transferred B.ed. level.
- 3 Those are acronyms for programmes such as School Manag.
- 4 Viðskiptaráð Íslands, in this chapter I use the official English acronym CfC.
- 5 GERM – an acronym for Global Educational Reform Movement.
- 6 Those are 79 out of 242 preschools in Iceland.
- 7 The report had different proportions, but those are the ones I chose as a relevant for this chapter and the translation is mine.

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As the ground-breaking new policy was enacted in 2017 to change the landscape in ECEC policies, the focus and direction of ECEC policy in Korea is moving towards provision of child allowances to all families with young children, in parallel with the current free in-service benefits. In the current situation, in which the Korean ECEC sectors (kindergartens and child care centres) are dichotomised, with two different authorities in charge, introduction of a new policy that would be universalistic to practice may bring about more confusion and chaos among ECEC stakeholders in Korea. Hence there is a clear momentum for a coherent, explicit and monitoring framework and standardised tools to evaluate ECEC policies in the future. This move will provide new evidence on good practice and insights for policy development, setting a stepping stone to depoliticise the ECEC issues in Korea.

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alongside e-portfolios which they used primarily for communicating children's learning to parents. In many instances, children were given little or no access to their online portfolio, raising the question that 'if documentation of children's learning is only available online, how do teachers ensure that young children are able to re-visit, reflect on and self-assess their learning?' (Goodman & Cherrington, 2017, p. 36). Their findings highlight the importance of teachers carefully thinking through the adoption of new technologies, particularly in relation to the principles, goals and learning outcomes of *Te Whāriki*. To achieve such outcomes requires the provision of appropriate professional learning to support teachers' confidence and use of intentional practices when using digital technologies, including e-portfolios, while also including children in their own learning.

Future directions

We argue that it is time to move to 'actionable behaviours' (McLaughlin et al., 2015, p. 32) to enact the philosophical and aspirational foundations of *Te Whāriki*. Across the curriculum, including the areas we have highlighted in this chapter, EC teachers in Aotearoa/New Zealand appear to struggle relating theory to practice (Alvestad, Duncan, & Berge, 2009; Koh, 2017). Moving to ensure children's learning is more visible and that teachers engage in intentional teaching practices in which the goals they have for children's learning and the strategies they use to meet those goals are made explicit may help address this issue.

The provision of more professional learning opportunities for teachers, both at the pre-service and in-service level, is required to support greater intentionality within their practice together with using adaptive and responsive approaches that are appropriate for teaching and learning in EC settings. Such professional development should draw upon the characteristics of effective professional learning and development as identified by Mitchell and Cubey's (2003) best evidence synthesis of quality professional development, in particular that 'theoretical and content knowledge and information about alternative practices' is included and that it 'helps ... change educational practice, beliefs, understanding, and/or attitudes' (p. 81).

Alongside such professional learning programmes, we advocate for ongoing research to help inform, identify and enact specific teaching practices that work in Aotearoa/New Zealand EC settings. Finally, we look forward to the evaluation of the implementation of *Te Whāriki 2017* planned by the Education Review Office over the 2018–2020 period, in particular the extent to which teachers are better able to implement the curriculum and assess 'what matters here' (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 65) for all children.

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Notes

- 1 From 1 August 2018, it is possible to combine part-time place in kindergarten with graduated cash benefits (www.nav.no/no/Person/Familie/Barnetrygd+og+kontantstotte/Nyheter/forslag-til-endoringer-i-kontantst%C3%B8tteordningen-fra-1.august-2018).
- 2 Key Investigators in BePro: Elisabeth Bjørnstad, Jan Erik Johansson and Lars Gulbrandsen (Oslo and Akershus University College); Marit Alvestad and Eva Johansson (University of Stavanger); Liv Gjems and Thomas Moser (University of Southeast Norway); Edward Melhuish (Oxford University); and Jacqueline Barnes (Birkbeck University of London).
- 3 ITERS-R data were collected in collaboration with the project ‘Searching for Qualities’.
- 4 Note that ordinary staff and directors, for instance, join the same trade union, indicating common basic attitudes.

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have to be more oriented to the best practices. Teachers from advanced kindergartens have to be motivated to disseminate their teaching methods and experience. This process has already started in the most advanced universities and in-service teacher training institutions. Another focus is on better involvement of teacher's assistants into the educational process.

An important consequence of the study is that the self-organised networks of teachers and kindergartens interested in improvement of the early childhood education quality are appearing now. Members of the network are sharing their ideas, methods and practices, enriching each other.

The research completed in 2016–2017 will be prolonged as a longitude one. To build a more detailed picture of the ways to improve process quality, additional research, secondary to ECERS, will be needed (the effects of the preschool quality on child development, the quality of organisational culture of the kindergartens, teacher's representations on education quality etc.). Such research would help better understand the context and specific deficiencies of the system and to find the best ways for its development. The results of the study may be used in different levels of the policy-making: federal, regional and at the level of the preschool institution.

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Note

- 1 Curriculum here means a national-level document establishing key requirements for preschool education. By their status, curricula correspond to state educational standards of the Russian Federation but are different from them as regards the range of parameters covered. In particular, a number of international curricula do not include requirements for logistics, etc.

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To sum up, the chapter implies that future policy conception of the ECEC workforce in Serbia should be based on the vision of the ECEC teacher as the creator and researcher of the curriculum with the emphasis on the openness to the local community and families and diversified programmes and forms of ECEC (Baucal et al., 2016; Miškeljin, 2018). Moreover, continual professional development should support reflective professionalism within kindergarten as a learning community that could contribute to the continuous transformation of ECEC system (Pavlović Breneselović, 2014; Urban et al., 2012). Such an approach requires the provision of opportunities for the whole early childhood workforce to engage in collaborative learning and critical reflection, cooperation with other institutions, experts and children's families inside and outside the system, networking with researchers and institutions of the initial education and coherent system of support (Miškeljin, 2015; Pavlović Breneselović, 2014; Urban et al., 2012). In the light of the conception of initial and professional education, the existence of multiprofessional teams in Serbia remains a valuable source. Work conditions and the law status of ECEC preschool workforce in Serbia is also a challenge that needs to be addressed within policy onwards. Finally, there is a need for further research on the issue of ECEC teachers' education, work conditions and job prospects in order to inform future policy developments on ECEC and ECEC teachers' profession in Serbia.

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becoming a princess yet as real and possible as the ugly duckling becoming what he was in reality from the beginning, a beautiful swan. For this future hope to be realised, it will be important to keep a careful check on the continued commercialisation and privatisation of early childhood education where business models and franchises at local and global levels emphasise particular kinds of teacher performance and professionalism, and where professionalisation comes at the cost of in-house curricula that emphasis particular tasks to be completed alongside specific teacher professional development (Gupta, 2018; Lim, 2017). This brings us back to the concerns that Moss (2010) highlights of the educator being reduced to ‘technical status’ (p. 17), which seems to be in opposition to the autonomous and socially trusted expert early childhood professional that the teachers in our study understood as their hope for the future.

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Shiyan, 2018; Veraksa & Sheridan, 2018). Taking the child's previous experience as the point of departure, the teachers have to get involved and engage the children's interest in the unknown and create situations in which the child can negotiate, cooperate, reflect and develop standpoints and critical thinking.

Thus, in order to educate skilled and professional preschool teachers, the quality of the preschool teacher education as well as the quality of preschool, in which the preschool teacher students do their practical training, becomes vital. The competence of preschool teachers also plays an important role as they act as models for students during their practical training in preschools.

Critical aspects for the preschool quality need to be in focus for preschool teachers' education and competence development. They need to develop their pedagogical awareness, teaching, didactical and subject knowledge, competence to relate to children in dialogue, creating a sustainable shared thinking, developing child-focused strategies, clarifying and communicating an object of knowledge, challenging children's thinking while uniting play, care and education. It is primarily in interaction and communication, which are characterised by high sensitivity, responsiveness and dialogue about different contents, that is predicting the development of children's language, cognitive and social abilities in the long term. These aspects are also identified in other research (see Persson, 2015; Pramling and Pramling Samuelsson, 2011; Sheridan, 2016; Sheridan et al., 2009; Sheridan & Williams, 2018; Williams et al., 2018).

If we want preschool to become more teaching and learning-oriented in the direction of the overall goals, and at the same time avoid falling into the trap of formal and teacher-directed activities, new approaches to research, education and evaluations are also needed. The knowledge of what is highly valued, and how the world looks from the perspective of the child, is crucial for teachers when they create conditions for the children to learn and develop. It is vital that preschool teachers develop a scientific approach and knowledge in order to relate everyday situations to educational theories, the preschool curriculum and research findings (Sheridan & Williams, 2018; Sylva et al., 2010).

Preschool needs to become an important place for early intervention to allow all children an equal start in life. Especially as low-quality preschools seem to lead to societal deprivation for children and their families as well as society (Hansen & Nordahl, 2016; Manning et al., 2010; Sylva et al., 2010). Early intervention, through high-quality preschool, is therefore important to make the necessary changes in children's lives to allow positive life trajectories (Heckman, 2000; Sylva et al., 2010). The Swedish studies can provide a platform for future discussion across countries about policies and practices to improve the quality of learning and wellbeing in preschools, especially across the Nordic region.

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Future directions

Recent child care policy changes in the Netherlands are aimed at increasing the quality of care in the country. As child care in its current form is a relatively new phenomenon for Dutch parents, it is important to educate parents about the benefits of high-quality child care on child development. This will require a shift in thinking on both parents' and educators' parts from ECECs being basically childminding facilities to communities of high-quality care benefiting child development. The recent policy changes require ECECs to engage parents more directly and offer opportunities for parents and educators to work more closely in creating these communities of care. It will be important to evaluate the effectiveness of the policy changes and whether there is an increase in parental engagement benefiting children's development.

The new language requirements for educators are aimed at increasing the quality of care as well. Hopefully this requirement will encourage the debate on the relationship between educators' level of education and quality of care and will ask policy makers, researchers, educators and others whether changes are needed in terms of educator training requirements. The language requirement could also positively benefit parental engagement as educators might be better equipped to directly involve parents in the shared care of their child. If the government invests in providing additional training for educators, as well as evaluating the effectiveness of the policy changes, we will be able to examine if the quality of care improves, as well as the engagement with parents increases as well.

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schooling directly continues to grow. Therefore, the government should include ECE in the compulsory formal education process.

- Will help increase the availability of ECEC services to disadvantaged groups – families with low SES and residing in rural areas – through providing totally free ECEC services and increasing the number of schools. To increase the number of children who benefit from ECEC services, public preschools introduced the dual education system. Unfortunately, since this system does not meet working parents' demands, families tend to send their children to private preschools. However, since quality ECEC service prices are higher than families can afford, some parents necessarily opt for home care and/or cheaper, poor-quality ECEC services. Therefore, there is a strong need to increase the number of schools that provide free whole-day education. Furthermore, some regulations could be made to standardise school prices.
- Will encourage efforts to gather information about quality issues. Data could be collected regularly allowing for the consequences of implementations to be seen clearly, for problems to be eliminated and for new social policies to be put forward.

Overall in Turkey, the ECEC system is given importance and is improving gradually. However, it has some major problems, such as lack of services for younger children, unequal opportunities for access to ECEC services, low schooling ratio and lack of or a low-quality monitoring system. Although some of those issues were taken into account by applied social policies there is not any data about how those social policies are influential to deal with the problems. Hopefully, ECEC will be considered seriously and new and strong social policies that depend on research results will be applied and the system will be strengthened in the coming years.

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These recent studies highlight that it is high time for the field of early childhood research to reflect on the relationship between policy and practice for enhancement of childhood. Questions that emerge out of this reflection can be: (1) Has policy taken into consideration research findings effectively? (2) Does the cost of policy implementation in structural change result in high-quality process? (3) Many studies focus on academic success and school readiness of children. Should we be focusing on other benefits of early childhood education that may not be as well researched but important for young children? (4) If families can provide quality learning experiences for children, that appear just as good as formal kindergarten, how can we still assure policy makers to invest in preschools and continuity of care? These reflection questions are important now more than ever in making sense of education and care systems across the globe, given that many countries have invested heavily in early childhood education and care.

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