

A global history of early childhood education and care ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

- Full paper in pdf ^[2]

This paper is an overview of the history of developments in early childhood education and care (ECEC) around the world, with descriptions of regional and country variations of ECEC and emphasis on developments between the 1960s and 1990s.

Excerpts:

The contrast between developments in the advanced industrialized countries (the OECD countries) and the developing countries, is stark, even in the mid-1990s, especially with regard to access and coverage (enrollment rates) and quality. The relatively high proportion of providers that were public rather than private, is far more likely to characterize the European countries (including the CEE countries) than the African, Asian, and LAC countries; private programs were an especially large component of services for the under 3s. The European countries were clearly already moving towards universal preschool for 3-5 or 6 year olds or whenever compulsory primary school began. Apart from Europe, only Mexico seemed to be moving towards this standard.

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A few European countries had already moved towards an integration of care and education programs, but most countries around the world still kept these two functions separate. As a consequence, the dominant pre-primary education paradigm covering most EU countries, OECD countries, and the developing countries, assumes two ECEC systems and makes an explicit distinction between programs serving the under 3s, stressing care of children while mothers work (and, sometimes, access to health care, too), usually administered under ministries of social welfare or health), and programs serving the 3-5 or 6 year olds, stressing education, preparation for primary school and socialization, usually administered under ministries of education. A few countries integrated the two services under one administrative auspice, education, such as Sweden did in 1995, and New Zealand and Vietnam did earlier, in 1986 and 1987. Although Brazil has done this administratively, it has still not really been implemented.

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Although support for working mothers is stressed as a priority in almost all surveys and discussion since the early 1960s, there has been surprisingly little attention to implementing relevant policies. Even as coverage and access increased, ECEC continued to be part-day in many countries; and despite the emphasis on the value of holistic programs, most tended to focus on achieving narrow school-related skills.

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Asia ^[4]

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